

Alchemy 571

Chapter 571: The Palace

Luo Mei teared up once again, as she always did. However, she was not the only one to cry this time.

Wen Cheng and Alex teared up as well. Only Liu Xun stood stoic in the group, but he too saw suppressing the tears in his eyes.

The graduation was over and Alex had received a badge that said 'Alumnus' similar to the nameplate that he had gotten from the Hong Wu sect.

"Will you really be alright?" Luo Mei asked in between her tears. She had considered him guaranteed to leave by this point, so she didn't bother trying to make him stay.

"I will be fine, sister. You have nothing to worry about," Alex said.

"Yes you will," Liu Xun said. "Next time we see each other, you might even be stronger than me or master."

"Even if I am, I will still be your younger brother and Master's disciple," Alex said with a small smile.

"Alright, take care. Go get your beast back," Wen Cheng said.

"Yes, master," Alex responded.

The 3 of them hugged Alex and Alex waved them goodbye before leaving the sect. He wiped his tears away and walked onward with a face full of determination.

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A day later, Alex arrived at the Cardinal city once more. He had already kept away his flying boat nearly an hour earlier just to be safe and not be seen by anyone.

Since then, he had been flying normally all the way to the capital.

He got into the queue of people waiting to get in. He remembered having to do something similar when he first came to the scarlet city.

'Hmm... are these my memories?' Alex got a little confused. It sure felt like it.

Alex brought out some money to pay the guards, but they stopped him and showed him the way to another group of guards who were with other cultivators.

Alex didn't understand what was going on, but he obeyed.

"May we ask who you are and what your purpose of visit to the city is?" the guards asked him when he reached next to them. "We're sorry. There has been a bandit attack on a city to the west, so we've been asking everyone that has any worthy cultivation base."

"Ah," Alex understood. "Yes, my name is Yu Ming, from Scarlet City. I am here to meet the emperor."

The guards were about to note down the information when they stopped. "Brother, please don't joke around. Give us the correct answer," they said.

"That's the truth," Alex said. "I was invited by the Emperor. You can call the palace and check up if you don't believe me."

"Take him aside and keep him in the room for a while," a guard ordered another guard, who complied easily.

"This way," the guard took Alex. The guard was neither polite, nor rude in his treatment of Alex, and when he reached the room, Alex sat on a chair that was inside.

"Please wait while we confirm your words," the guard said.

"Yes, please do," Alex said with a smile toward the guard.

The guard sent some information through a talisman and waited for a while. After a few minutes, a message came back in the talisman.

"Sorry brother, but what did you say your name was?" the guard asked.

"Yu Ming," Alex said. It felt a little weird using that name, but it would be one he would keep for a while.

"What sect are you from?" the guard asked.

"From the Hong Wu sect and Tiger sect of Scarlet City," Alex replied.

"Ah, I see. It seems you were the right person. Please come with me; I've been assigned to bring you to the palace," the guard said.

"Yes, let's go," Alex stood up from the chair and walked with the guard.

Alex saw the many people of the city going about their days in the city. It wasn't as crowded as when the competition had taken place, but it was still plenty crowded.

The colorful atmosphere of the city reminded him of the festival back in the countryside.

"You don't look very strong, brother," the guard asked as he looked at Alex.

"Haha, not when compared to you," Alex said, looking at the guard whose cultivation base should have been between True Master 7th and 9th realm. Alex still had a slight problem telling cultivation apart.

His own cultivation was still at the 2nd realm of True Disciple, so he was really weak comparatively. Of course, that was without counting his body cultivation.

"So you must have some other features than just being a cultivator right?" the guard asked.

"I'm an alchemist," Alex said.

"Oh, an alchemist?" the guard asked with a surprised look. "You must be a genius in alchemy to be called by the emperor at such a young age."

"I... do fine for myself," Alex said. He didn't bother explaining that he wasn't here for alchemy purposes.

The guard was a curious one who kept the conversation going by asking quite a few questions, most of which Alex answered without any hesitation.

The 2 of them walked through the city going in the southern direction.

Alex had come from the northern gate, so he would have to walk for a while to reach the palace.

The palace occupied a large area of land at the center of the city and was surrounded by large walls about 20 meters high. They weren't as tall as city walls which were close to 50 meters high.

The palace had a single gate that was facing to the north. So, Alex and the guard had to completely walk around the walls to reach the palace.

"Here we are," the guard said as they finally reached the palace.

An old man stood at the front of the gate and looked at Alex who was next to the guard.

"Are you sir Yu Ming?" the old man asked.

"Yes, I am," Alex said. "But you don't have to call me sir."

"Hmm... your appearance doesn't match what I was told you would look like. Also, I wasn't told that you had a missing arm," the old man said.

"I lost my arm in the city against the bandits. As for the appearance, I can't help it. I've changed since then," Alex said.

"This puts me in a bit of tro—"

"Yu Ming? You are finally here?" A voice came from behind the old man as a woman walked up to them. She wore a blue, translucent robe that seemed to have been made from the lightest silk out there.

Her hair was braided behind her in such a fancy way that Alex was sure it took 5 different maids to tame that.

"My greetings, princess," Alex said.

"Why are you hiding your face? Did you make an enemy or something?" she asked.

"Your highness, you recognize this sir? The information I was given doesn't match—"

"Oh, don't worry, old Han. He's the right person. I saw him with this face in the competition the day of the invasion," she said.

"Ah, then that settles it," the old man said.

"You go in, I will take him in," the princess said.

"Princess, I can't let you do that," the old man said.

"Alright, then follow us," she said and turned to Alex. "Come in. Father has been waiting for you for a long time."

Chapter 572: Discussion

"I heard your master passed away, my condolences," The princess said as they walked in.

"Thank you, princess," Alex said. He looked around the outer gardens of the palace that was nearly 3 times as large as the City lord's manor.

There were trees and flowers of many kinds and Alex could recognize quite a few of them as being rare ones.

The servants in the garden and the walkway to the palace wore two different kinds of clothing. One was a simple peasant robe of very light red color.

The other was a black robe that Alex recognized to belong to the Royal Fu Academy.

"Do the graduates of the Royal Fu Academy come to work in the palace?" Alex asked.

"Some do," the princess said. "Most do their own thing. We don't bind them to work for us only."

"I see," Alex said. Ahead of the path came the massive palace that looked to be completely made up of white limestone. However, given how well it had handled its weight, Alex doubted if it really was that.

The princess didn't ask him a lot of questions and directly brought him to her father's place deep in the palace.

Along the way, Alex could see that the whole palace was made up of grayish-white color with a few red pieces of furniture that worked as accent pieces for the palace.

When Alex entered the room that belonged to the Emperor, he was immediately met with a bright white room with furniture that could only be called crimson in color.

Not only the furniture, even the curtains, and drapes as well as the carpet was crimson in color.

There were a few chairs in the room, all grandiose in nature, and had a few people sitting on them.

"Come on in. This is my father's study room," the princess said bringing him in to meet the people.

The Emperor was sat in the center of the group. His face showed confusion when he saw Alex walk in.

"He's here, father," the princess told the emperor.

"That's not..."

"Greetings, your Majesty, your highnesses, and seniors," Alex bowed towards the entire group.

"This is him," the princess said. "I think he might be one of those players too."

"Ah, that makes sense," the emperor said. "Welcome to the palace, young man. I'm glad to see you have survived the beasts somehow."

'Eh? Do they know I'm a player? Has the news about players spread this far?' he wondered.

"Come on, sit down. Let me introduce you to these people," the emperor beckoned Alex to sit on the seat next to him.

Alex nodded and walked over.

"Where am I going to sit?" the princess asked in an annoyed voice.

"Eh? You want to sit with us, Wuying?" the Emperor asked.

"Of course," the princess said. "I haven't asked him any questions just because I wanted to get him here quickly."

"Alright," the emperor pointed to the corner of the room and a chair floated right next to them.

The princess smiled and sat on it next to Alex.

"Let me introduce you to everyone, young man," the emperor said. "You already know these two old men Yang and Feng from last time, right? Feng Xuan and Yang Fei are both heads of the Feng and Yang family and are some of the only Saint realm cultivators of the Crimson Empire."

Alex bowed towards both of them.

The emperor then moved on to the two men next to them who looked young but showed signs of aging.

"These are my 2 sons, Fuxian is the older one and will succeed me, and Yuhan is the younger one," the Emperor said.

The two sons looked just like their father but lacked broad shoulders as well as rough beards.

Alex bowed to the two of them as well.

Finally, there were two people on the last chair. One man, one woman.

Neither of them looked like they belonged here, and judging by the message Alex had received, he believed these two to be the outside.

"Fellow Daoist, my name is Fu Tao," the man said as he cupped his fists towards Alex. He wore a red robe and looked quite young for someone with a cultivation base that Alex couldn't quite figure out.

'Is he in the upper True Lord realm? Maybe even lower True King realm,' Alex thought.

The man had a well-built body and a clean-shaven face. His red robe with the golden embroidery made him look like someone of royalty as well.

"This here is Lu Yan," the man introduced the woman next to her. She wore a green robe that covered her whole body, including a veil that hid her face.

From what Alex could see, he assumed the girl wasn't very old either, and she still exuded aura close to the upper True lord realm.

"Greetings, brother Tao, Sister Yan," Alex greeted them back as well. "If I may be so rude, may I know how old brother Tao is this year?"

"Oh, it's fine," the man said. "I'm 27 years old."

"Wow, my master who is nearly triple your age is only a few realms higher than you, brother Tao. You must be really talented," Alex said.

"Haha, I am alright," the man said, but he was feeling a little proud of himself at the moment.

"Now that introductions are over, young man, why don't you tell us about your days in the Beasts' realm? How did you survive there?" The emperor asked.

Alex nodded and got to explain as much as he could without giving away the specifics. He told them that he was kept as a prisoner, but had enough freedom to go out to the gardens. He told them how he spend most of the days simply cultivating and doing nothing.

He told them that his beast had been taken away as well. Aside from that, he gave information about the secret realm spanning continent-wide, making it impossible to directly go to the other side without going through the beast's realm or taking a detour through the ocean first. The two outsiders listened to him and frowned.

"You can't go to the ocean," the Emperor said. "It's a death trap. The beasts there are so strong that they will make me look like a weakling."

Alex was surprised to hear that. 'The ocean has such strong beasts? Thank god nothing attacked me when I was on the shore,' he thought.

"Those beasts can't come up to the land, so there's no need to worry about that area. As for actual information, Do you have anything that will help us survive in the realm?" the man named Tao asked.

"I have a piece of information that may be able to help you," Alex said. "It was around the time when I saw the flash of light inside the secret realm. I had asked a beast at the time, and she had told me that it was you guys entering the realm."

"When I asked if you were safe, she said that you would be safe as long as you didn't go around looking for trouble yourself," Alex said.

"Although, I must warn you. The humans were the ones that destroyed the western continent after their king died, so most of the beasts have an improperly driven hatred for even humans of this continent itself."

Chapter 573: Teach Me

Alex explained to them a few more things regarding the secret realms that he had come to learn through simply hearsay.

The man and woman, namely Fu Tao and Lu Yan, were still scared of returning even after learning what they had learned.

"Cousin Tao, I'm sure you will be alright. If what young Yu Ming has said is accurate, you will just have to not try to provoke the beasts," the emperor said.

'Cousin?' Alex wondered why the emperor was calling him that. 'Is this Fu family the same as the royal Fu family?'

"I understand, cousin," Fu Tao said. "But my fear still remains. I watched a lot of the people who entered with me get torn to shreds by the strong beasts."

"Although I believe they were the first ones to provoke the beasts, it still causes me quite a bit of discomfort knowing that they can kill us at any time."

"Given that we have to travel for nearly a week's worth of time without stopping anywhere, it will be hard to stay unnoticed," the man said.

"So we will have to sneak in quietly," the girl said.

"Sneaking is just impossible. Entrance through the teleportation platforms shines a bright light in all directions on top of making a noise. Also, the palace will immediately learn about the intruders the moment we enter."

"Our process should not be to sneak in, rather enter politely. If you sneak, they might consider you to have a bad intention," Ning said.

The man nodded when he heard that, but then he rose his eyebrows. "We? Are you planning to go in there again, young brother?" Fu Tao asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "As I mentioned, my beast is still in there. I intend to take him back."

"Uhh... isn't the cat in the palace with the saints?" the emperor asked.

"What? If that is so then we can't take you with us, young brother," Fu Tao said.

"I don't expect you to help me save my cat. I only ask you that you let me get in with you," Alex said.

"I... don't know, that still sounds quite dangerous. We are afraid of the trouble coming back to us," the man said.

Alex sighed. That was understandable. He would have perhaps done the same thing in the man's situation as well.

"Then how about this," Alex said. "Can you teach me how to open the teleportation platform? I will go in a week after you guys. By then, you should have already left the realm, right?"

The man fell into thought. "Yeah, that should be possible," he said. "If you are willing to wait at least a week, then I am willing to teach you the method to open the formation as well."

Alex's eyes shined. "Thank you, brother Tao," he said.

"Alright, that should be enough for today. Will you leave tomorrow then, cousin Tao?" the Emperor asked.

"Yes, I want to go back as soon as possible," the man said.

The two of them left, and so did the princess. Only the princess and the Emperor remained.

"I didn't think you would be wanting to go there too," the emperor said.

"I need to," Alex said.

"Alright, Wuying will show you to a guest room. Since you will be likely staying for an entire week, make yourself at home," the emperor said.

"Yes," Alex said. "By the way, your majesty. I... have a small request."

"Request? Go on, if it is possible, I will grant it," he said.

"Will it be possible for you to ask senior Lai to meet me?" Alex asked.

"Lai Qing?" the emperor asked curiously.

"Yes," Alex said. "I want to know if he has any knowledge about pills that would help regrow my arm."

"Ah, yes. You should be concerned about that as well. I will send him a message. As for when he will come, I don't know myself," the Emperor said.

"As long as you send him a message, I am fine with that," Alex said.

"Alright, I will do so," The emperor said.

Alex left with the princess and went along with her to his guest room. However, it didn't seem like the princess intended to bring him there as she brought him someplace else.

Alex looked around awkwardly as the passing maids and servants looked at him curiously.

'Where are we going?' he wondered.

They went past a set of hallways before reaching a section of the palace that seemed to not have that many people working there.

The Princess walked up to a room that was guarded by 2 black-robed figures and asked that she be let in.

The guards opened the door and she walked in with Alex in tow.

"Aunt Mixie, look who is here," she said in a loud voice as she walked in.

"Little Wuying, you need to stop shouting while inside," A man said as he walked out of the inner section of the massive room.

"Second Uncle, where is aunt?" she asked.

"I'm here, child. I heard you the first time," a woman that looked to be in her late 20s arrived in front of them. She wore a red dress with long flowing hair.

Alex looked at the woman. Although her skin color had changed quite a lot, her face still remained the same.

"Aunt Mixie, I brought him to meet you," the princess said.

The husband-wife looked at Alex, but they wouldn't recognize him no matter what.

"Who is this young man? Certainly not your..." the uncle said.

"Stop thinking stupid things uncle. He is the one that helped cure Aunt," the princess said.

"Oh, OH," the two of them finally realized who they were looking at.

"Young man, you must be Yu Ming then. I am Fu Zemin, the second High prince of the empire," the man introduced himself.

"Greetings, your highness," Alex bowed towards the both of them.

"You need not bow towards us, child. You saved my life. I, Rei Mixie, bow towards you," the woman bowed slightly towards Alex.

"Ah, you don't have to do that, your highness," Alex said. "I am just glad to see that you are doing fine."

Seeing a person, whose cultivation base was in the True Emperor realm bowing in front of him made Alex feel quite awkward.

The two couples happily asked questions to Alex, who answered as well as he could. They showed a genuine smile towards him and were really kind people.

Alex couldn't help but wonder how such a family could produce someone like Zexi.

After a while, the princess finally took him to his guest room. Alex went into the grand guest room that would make anyone feel jealous regarding the royals.

Alex closed the door and went on to cultivate. He decided to not cultivate his yang technique while he was in the palace and instead went with the Yin technique to reduce the yang his body was naturally producing.

After a whole night of cultivation, Alex woke up in the morning. He went out and met up with the people that were ready to leave.

"You're here, young brother," Fu Tao said. "Let us go then. Finally, we can return back home."

After nearly 4 hours of flying, the group of 6 arrived at the location for the teleportation platform.

Alex's face turned cold when he saw that location. Just one more step and he would be on his way to save Pearl.

However, Alex couldn't do that right now. He needed to wait like he had promised. If he tried to force himself in, he could very well be attacked by them for trying to ruin their chances of survival.

He looked at the group of 6, of which Fu Zemin and Rei Mixie were the most surprising ones.

It seemed that they were going to leave the Crimson Empire to go roam the rest of the continent together. They already had no responsibilities whether it be to their children, to the family or to the empire.

They were free spirits, bored out of their minds, which was one of the reason why Rei Mixie had went out exploring so long ago and had found the raw Divine Devil fruit that made her unconscious for months.

"So this is the platform huh?" she said. "Last time during the expedition, I had gone way further from here. If only we knew at the time that there was a saint grade formation laid around that place."

"At least we know now," Fu Zemin said.

"Are you two absolutely sure you want to go?" The Emperor asked.

"Yes, brother," Fu Zemin said.

"You guys really don't want to wait for your grandchildren to be born?" the Emperor asked.

The couple hesitated for a moment and then shook their head. "I'm sure we will be back soon to meet our grandchildren," Rei Mixie said.

"If you say so, sister-in-law," the Emperor said.

"Young brother, come here. I will show you how its done," Fu Tao said as he called Alex to the formation.

Alex went up to him and looked at the formation. He still wasn't sure how one was supposed to run this formation without it having a metal base.

Alex looked at the formation and based on the number of strokes, it seemed to be a simple True rank formation.

"You've used normal formations, right?" Fu Tao asked.

"Yes, I have," Alex said.

"Good, then it will be a little easier to explain. You see, in normal formations, there is always a metal plate in it. In a metal, we can pour however much Qi we want and it will bring it to an equilibrium once all of these dividends are filled."

"However, this one is different. Since there is no metal plate to bring your energy to an equilibrium, if you want to run such a formation, you need to bring equilibrium to it yourself," Fu Tai said.

'Equilibrium...' Alex thought. He understood this idea quite well.

Fu Tao walked on top of the formation bringing Alex with him. "You see these end points where all the lines gather? What you need to do is give a specific amount of Qi into it. Then, you immediately give the next one a different amount of Qi, followed by the next one and so on until all the end points have energy in them."

"As for how much energy you have to put in, take a moderate amount, and multiply that by the number of lines per end point," Fu Tao said.

Alex didn't need to hear Fu Tao anymore. He already understood the concept and was surprised that it was so easy. Especially since he had already used the same concept last time to improve his skin alone.

'Right, equilibrium. That formation was based on the Yang jades, which defused the energy onto the formation, instead of a user. Maybe I could've done it too if I had the same level of yang Qi,' Alex thought.

'So, while that formation used the yang jades as an energy source, I can use myself as one for this one. In a similar concept, all the nodes need to have the same amount of energy so that they spread through the stroke at an equal rate.'

Alex felt enlightened. It was such an easy concept he had already put to use, but he was only understanding how it worked. 'So metals automatically bring energy to equilibrium, huh?' he thought.

As he continued contemplating on the matter, a curious case of confusion came before him.

"Brother Tao, do these formations not need an energy source?" he asked.

"No," Fu Tao shook his head. "Since it is a one-time use formation, it doesn't need an energy source, only enough energy to run it once."

"Ah," Alex understood. 'Right, once they're teleported, the formation would have no use if it keeps on running. I never thought about that.'

"You are quite talented in the matters of formation," Alex said while thinking, 'even though you can't use words like stroke and nodes.'

"Haha, it's not me who is smart. It's just that my grandfather is a formation expert. It was him who came up with the knowledge to run this formation," Fu Tao proudly said.

"Ah, I see. Are there many people in the Luminance empire with such high knowledge?" Alex asked.

He was quite surprised to think that he had never learned about such things from the internet.

"No," Fu Tao said. "Only my grandfather knows of it. Which is why only my Granduncle knew how to open it, and why now only I know how to open it."

"Ah I see," Alex said. "He must be an exceptional genius in the ways of formations then."

"Haha, not really. He just found a book that talked about formations from the meteor shower," Fu Tao said with a slight smile.

"Meteor shower?" Alex's eyes suddenly narrowed. "Um, brother, can you tell me a little more about this Meteor shower?"

"Um... sure," Fu Tao said. "About 1200 or so years ago, there was a meteor shower that dropped quite a few things onto the western continent. Some got spirit stones, some got weapons, some got unreadable techniques."

"My grandfather got a book that taught about formations. I don't know how many of those there are out there, but my grandfather is certainly one of the luckier ones since his book could be read."

"I see," Alex said. "Thank you for teaching me all of that."

"It's alright. You've been quite a bit of help for us too," Fu Tao said.

"Are we ready to go?" Lu Yan came up to him and asked.

"Yes," Fu Tao turned around. "Cousins, come. We should leave now."

"Yes," Fu Zemin and Rei Mixie walked up to the formation platform, while Alex got off it.

"Say your goodbyes now," Fu Tao said while releasing his energy to the different nodes at the same time.

"Goodbye brother," Fu Zemin said.

"Go, and don't worry about your children. They are already old enough to take care of themselves," the Emperor said.

"Good luck on getting your cat, young man," lady Rei said to Alex.

"Thank you," Alex responded.

Soon, the energy on the platform reached an equilibrium and everything started shining in bright white light.

Alex closed his eyes as the light got very bright at once point, and then it disappeared.

When he reopened his eyes, the 4 people on top of the platform were gone.

Chapter 575: Burnt Book

A few more days, that was all Alex had to wait. It had been 4 days since Fu Tao and the group had teleported into the beast's realm.

For the last 4 days, he had been doing nothing but staying in the palace or going out to the city with the princess.

The princess' guard was always with her, but she never came out to speak with Alex. It seemed that she was still shy from the last time.

Alex had already gone through all the markets buying everything he wanted from ingredients to recipes to formations to even swords.

The one he got was a weak one even compared to his own previous sword. At least, it would be easier to refine.

The rest of the time he would spend in Alchemy hall in the city where he could make as many pills as he could.

On the 2nd day, he had made a particularly good harvest.

After returning from walking around the city, Alex had gone back to his room to rest.

However, just then someone knocked on the door to his guest room. Alex left his bed and opened the door to see a maid outside.

"His Majesty calls you to his study room," she said.

"The emperor is calling for me?" Alex asked and left the room. The maid showed the way to the study room and stopped a bit before reaching the place.

"Your Majesty, you called for me?" Alex asked as he entered the door.

"Ah, you are here. Come, come," the Emperor beckoned him in.

Alex walked in to see that the Emperor was not alone. He was instead with a feminine-looking man of thin building, luscious flowing black hair, and eyes that would make men question their likes and dislikes.

The man looked weak, but his cultivation base aura said otherwise. The man was at least a True Emperor realm expert. That was all he could tell from the aura.

'Who is this person?' Alex wondered.

He walked up to the emperor and took a seat next to him, waiting for him to introduce the man.

"Alright, I will leave you two to talk," the Emperor said standing up to leave.

'Huh? Talk? What?' Alex was extremely confused, but before he could even say anything, the emperor left.

Alex didn't know what to do now. He felt extremely awkward in front of this person he had never seen before.

"Greetings!" Alex still decided to greet the man.

The man bowed a little towards Alex and said, "I only recently came to learn about little Ma's passing. My Condolences."

"T-thank you," Alex said before his eyes narrowed in suspicion.

'Little Ma?' he thought. 'Aside from Grandmaster, I have only ever heard one person...'

"Ah, I'm sorry, senior Lai. I recognized you too late," Alex said. The man in front of him was Lai Qing, the Royal Alchemist.

"Haha, I'm surprised you recognized me at all. I usually have to talk with people for a while before they figure out who I am," the Royal alchemist said.

"Thankfully, I recognized you, or our conversation might have been incredibly awkward," Alex said. "Still, I have seen you 3 times now, and each time you have a different face on. Is there a reason?"

"No particular reason, really," the royal alchemist said. "I was a young man when I got into alchemy and spent nearly 2 centuries trying to hone my skills as an alchemist."

"By the time I was big enough to be given the title of the Royal Alchemist, I realized that I had spent all of my youth tucked away in a room with a fire and a cauldron."

"I felt a little regret for losing my youth, so I try to bring it back in any way possible," the Royal Alchemist said.

"Centuries?" Alex was a little surprised. "How old are you?"

"Me? I... don't know," the Royal Alchemist said. "I should be a little more than 400 years now."

Alex was stunned. He had met old people, but none that were this old as a True realm cultivator.

"That's not what you brought me here to speak about, is it?" he asked.

"No," Alex said. "I requested your audience so that you could teach me about the Structure and Compositions as you promised."

"Sigh, I told you to give up last time, didn't I? It's a difficult concept to understand that even Ma Rong would have a hard time understanding."

"As I said last time, come back to me when you've made a Heaven Grade Tr—"

Alex suddenly put forth a pill bottle next to the Royal Alchemist, stopping him mid-speech.

The royal alchemists sniffed the aroma that was coming off of the pill bottle even though it had a stopper on it.

His eyes widened as he took it. "What pill is this?" he asked.

"A Two-fold Qi Absorption pill," Alex said. That was a pill that doubled the speed of cultivation under normal circumstances.

The Royal Alchemist knew pretty well about this pill. It was a commonly found recipe that almost all True realm alchemists knew.

However, that was not the reason he was so surprised. He opened the stopper and took the pill out and looked at it.

It was a light lime-colored pill with uneven spots of red dots all around it.

The Royal Alchemist said nothing and pulled out a Pill Tester and immediately put in the pill.

Fog appeared around the glass of the tester and slowly went up. The Royal Alchemist had a guess about the pill, but no matter how he looked at it, this should not have been real.

However, it was.

The fog stopped moving and the tester gave the result he was expecting.

51%

This was a Heaven Grade True pill.

"You made this?" the Royal Alchemist asked with wide eyes.

"You said that I would be eligible to learn about Structure and Composition once I was able to make a Heaven Grade True Pill, right?" Alex asked.

"Here it is. Now, please teach me."

The Royal alchemist looked in absolute shock. He had been nearly a hundred years old when he had reached this level.

However, this kid that was in front of him, that wasn't even 20 years old could somehow make such an amazing pill. The Royal alchemist couldn't believe it.

"Did you really make this?" he asked.

"Yes, only 2 days ago," Alex said. "I was hoping you would be okay with this 48% pill I had managed to do about a week ago, but fortunately, I happened to make this 51% pill too."

The Royal Alchemist heard this and his eyes changed and got serious. "It seems you were serious about learning it. I guess you have the right to."

He reached into his storage bag and pulled out a small book that looked old and almost torn in places. The outer cover looked new, but everything else did not.

"What is that?" Alex asked.

"It is the book that gave me the knowledge I have today. Everything I am came from this book right here," the Royal Alchemist said.

"Everything I am about to tell you is something I learned from this book," he said.

He put it forth in front of him, and Alex slowly moved his hands towards it, thinking he was presenting it to him.

"NO!" The Royal Alchemist pulled back his hands, his eyes glaring at him fiercely. It took him a second to realize what he was doing.

He calmed down, the look in his eyes disappearing, and said, "Sorry about that. This is my holy scripture, and I cannot let anyone else touch it."

"Holy scripture?" Alex asked. "Does that book contain information about Alchemy?"

"Yes," the Royal Alchemist said. "I was but a normal cultivator at the start. I was a poor, rogue cultivator that lived his day-to-day life by hunting beasts and selling it."

"If I hadn't accidentally come across this book during one of my hunts, I would have never been able to reach the heights I have reached today," the royal Alchemist said.

"What is it called?" Alex asked.

"I don't know. The outer cover was burned off, so I could never learn its name," the Royal Alchemist said.

'Outer cover was burned?' Alex thought. There was something in his mind that told him why the outer cover could have possibly been burned.

'Could it be...' he thought, 'that this book too... came down in the meteor shower?'

Chapter 576: Symmetry

Lai Qing was just a young man that had been sent down the path of cultivation without any wishes of his own.

He wasn't the best at it and had to try his hardest to even reach Bone Tempering realm.

One day, in the forests that were still present where the desert had formed, he was hunting for weak beasts as he should and found the book that contained information about alchemy.

He dismissed it at first but was soon intrigued by the information and decided to check it out.

That was at the age of 29.

He didn't join any Alchemy sects, or take any teachers and simply tried on his own.

He bought books about ingredients and recipes with what little information he had and used the superior information of the coverless book to augment his understanding of Alchemy.

He spent decades upon decades trying to learn alchemy. When he realized that the book was truly incredible, he started showing it off as well.

Soon, people started noticing him. Some called him to teach them alchemy, some called him to lecture in theirs.

Even the ministers called him to write an alchemy book for the royal library. Afterward, he was given the title, the Royal Alchemist of Crimson Empire, making him someone with a status that was only lower than the Royal family themselves.

Now, he was one of the most well-respected people in the entire Crimson Empire.

And it all happened because of the colorless book he was holding at the moment in front of Alex.

"How much do you know about Structure and Composition again?" the Royal Alchemist asked.

"As much as you've written in your book. I know that Composition has to do with the ratio of the powders in the final product so that it can absorb the most energy."

"As for Structure... I'm a little confused about that. It has to do with the shape of the powder's particles themselves which I will be honest, I don't understand much of," Alex said.

The royal Alchemist nodded his head when he heard it. "You are not far off on Composition."

"Every time you make a pill, you put in the ingredients and turn it into powder right? Forget about the temperature and movements. The most fundamental truth of making pills is that you have to turn an ingredient into powder."

"Do you know why we do that?" the Royal Alchemist asked.

"Yes, to release the energy within the ingredient," he said.

"Yes, but then why is there a focus on keeping the powder in there? Can't you just put in other powders you had maybe prepared beforehand? Why do alchemists insist on keeping the powder of the ingredient the energy came from?" the Royal Alchemist asked.

Alex cocked his head in thinking. He had never given this aspect of alchemy much thought.

"That's because only that ingredient's powder can be used in absorbing the final resulting energy?" he asked.

"Close," the Royal Alchemist said. "You seem to have a very fundamental misunderstanding of the Alchemy process. You seem to believe that energies disappear when you mix ingredients, but that is not so."

Alex knew that already, but he kept quiet and let the Royal Alchemist speak as he listened with full attention.

"When you mix the energies, they interact with each other, and out comes a single type of energy from the two. However, even though you only see one type of energy, there is in fact both of those previous energies in that resulting energy."

"They are only hiding because the weaker of the energy interacts with some of the stronger energy and brings it into equilibrium, thus leaving only one type of the energy to be seen by the observer."

"Also, if an energy comes from one ingredient, only its powder can hold that energy in the end."

"So, if you make a pill with 14 different ingredients, even though the final resulting energy will be of one type, they will still have all the 14 original energy. They are only hidden because they are in harmony."

"Since you have 14 types of energy, you still need 14 types of powder to hold it. This is why you cannot throw away the original powder. That is where Composition comes in."

"If you lose even the tiniest bit of powder, it cannot hold energy that belonged to it. And since all energy is in a harmony, if there is no room for one, there is no room for any."

"This is one of the major reasons why alchemists end up making low harmony pills," the Royal Alchemist said.

Alex nodded. He had truly come to learn something. 'So the best course of action is to start with the appropriate amount of ingredient, and never lose any bits of powder,' Alex thought.

"I believe I understand, senior Lai," Alex said.

"Good," the Royal Alchemist said. "Now let's move on to Structure."

Alex waited for him to start speaking, but the Royal Alchemist didn't speak at all.

"Senior?" he called out.

"Ah, sorry. Structure... is a difficult concept to explain," he said. "You see there are more than one ways to turn an ingredient into powder while releasing the same rate of energy."

"Ah, yes. I know about that," Alex said. "I came to know a lot about it when I made my own pills."

"Yes, so when you do the things differently, you end up creating the different shapes of powder. It is those powders that you put together in such a way that there is no gap in between the powders," he said.

"Sorry, gap?" Alex asked.

"Yes," the Royal Alchemist said. "Having gaps in your pill is one of the worst things you can do. Well, it's less of a gap between the powders being the problem but more of the chaos gaps can bring to the overall structure of the pill."

"Let's take the 14 ingredient pill from before as the example. When you finish making the pill, you will need all 14 of those different powders to form a clump such that there are as less gaps as possible."

"Since you can't individually make them, you will have to rely on shapes that more or less fit together perfectly. That way, you get rid of the gaps in the pill."

"So what you are actually doing with structure is removing the gap as much as possible. A compact pill is always a better pill," The Royal Alchemist said.

Alex was very confused. He understood why having more powder helped gather more energy, but how did gaps have anything to do with it?

"Shouldn't just having all the powders be enough? That should do it even if there are gaps, right?" he asked.

The Royal Alchemist smiled. "You would think that, wouldn't you. Logically it makes sense for pills to contain energy like that. Except, it turns out that isn't the case."

"After all, our world is way more magical and mystical than even what we've come to learn," the Royal alchemist said.

"I've told you about composition and structure, but those two are merely two parts that come together to make the most important aspect of a pill's formation," the Royal Alchemist said. "That is... the Symmetry."

"Symmetry?" Alex looked confused. "Symmetry of...?"

"The powder in the pill. Depending on how symmetrical the structure of the powder in the overall pill is, the amount of energy it can store is the same as well," the Royal Alchemist said.

"This is why you don't want gaps. Having solid clumps of powder make it easier for a pill to be symmetrical," the royal Alchemist shape.

Alex was still a little confused. "What does symmetry have anything to do with it though?" he asked.

"I don't know," the Royal Alchemist said. "But that's what this book tells me to do, and ever since I did, it's been working for me. So, it should work for you too."

'Symmetry? How does that help a pill with keeping more energy in it?' he wondered.

As he thought that, he remembered something else. Something that felt so obvious to him by now that he didn't even think of it the first time he heard it.

"Symmetry... formations have that too. When you make a formation, you have to make straight strokes at correct angles so that the overall formation comes out symmetrical. The better the symmetry, the better the formation's efficiency," Alex said as he remembered about it.

"Ah yes, I've heard about that too," The Royal Alchemist said. "Not only that, for Talismans, all the runes are symmetrical and the final drawn bigger run has to be in symmetry too."

"Similarly, Artifacts that usually have skills in them need to have symmetrical Qi lines too," the Royal Alchemist said.

"What is this fascination with Symmetry for all production skills?" Alex asked.

"Don't ask me, that's just how things are. I don't make the rules, I just follow them," the Royal Alchemist said.

"I see," Alex said. "I guess I understand everything you said today. Although, I might have to dwell on them for a bit."

"Take as much time as you need. These... are not simple concepts that you can understand in a sitting. Even if you do understand what they mean, putting them into work will take years," the Royal Alchemist said.

"Yes, I will try my best," Alex said.

"So, was that all you wanted to ask?" the Royal Alchemist asked.

"No, actually. There is one more thing I wanted to ask," Alex said as he pulled up his robe's sleeve to show the stub of his left arm and asked, "Can you help me with this?"

Chapter 577: Conversion

"Oh, you lost your arm?" The Royal Alchemist asked with a bit of surprise as he seemed to have finally noticed it.

"When did you lose it?" he asked.

"Um, about nearly 3 weeks ago now," Alex said.

"Ah, I'm sorry then," the Royal Alchemist said. "I could help you reattach it if it was a few hours or at most a day. But, over 2 weeks, I cannot help you with that."

"Is that so?" Alex asked. "Then, can you help me in downgrading a Saint Rank recipe to a True rank?"

The royal alchemist's eyes changed. "You have a saint rank recipe?" he asked.

"Yes," Alex said.

"Can I see it?" he asked.

Alex shook his head. "I only remember the recipe. I don't carry it around," he said.

"Alright then, write it down for me," he said.

Alex hesitated for a bit before remembering what the person in front of him had done for him by teaching him today. So, he decided to repay it back through the recipe.

He wrote it all down on a Talisman and handed it to the Royal Alchemist.

The Royal Alchemist read the talisman as his face appeared to be full of shock. "These are ingredients that I have only read about in this book. I have never seen them before myself," he said.

"Do you know how I can possibly downgrade these ingredients to a True rank alternative so that I can make a pill for myself?" he asked.

"Downgrade? That's... hard," he said. "Wait a second." The royal alchemist opened his book and flipped it for a good while before reaching a page.

"Ah, here it is! Note this down," he said.

Alex wasn't sure what he was about to say, but he waited for the ingredient list.

"Thorny Bugloss for Winevein Poppy, Silverstring Diascia for Trileaved Periwinkle Leaf, and... Auburn Rue's seeds instead of Dried Torenia flower," the Royal Alchemist read it out loud.

"These are the only conversion I have at the moment. Unfortunately, I have more Common and True rank conversion instead of the higher ones," the Royal Alchemist said.

Alex thought for a bit. The Saint Body Regeneration pill had about 12 ingredients to it. Of them, the Royal Alchemist had just given him 3 of the ingredients that would be used for the True rank version of the pill.

'That doesn't help me a lot at all,' Alex thought.

"Um, Senior Lai, can you teach me the concept behind upgrading or downgrading an ingredient? Even if it is just for the Common and True rank ingredients?" he asked.

"I suppose I can do that," the Royal Alchemist said.

"First of all, you have to understand that even though 2 ingredients might have the same energy, its actually different in subtle ways. You can never swap the metal energy of one ingredient for metal energy of another ingredient."

"So, the first thing you do is find out what this aspect of the ingredient is that makes it different."

"Usually you figure this out by looking at what the ingredient does, rather than the energy itself. If you want to upgrade or downgrade an ingredient that helps in closing up wounds, then the ingredient you want will likely do that same thing but just better or worse."

"So you start there," the Royal alchemist said.

He went on to explain as much as he could about the concept and Alex soaked it in like a dry sponge left out in the rain.

For nearly 20 minutes, the royal alchemist spoke on this topic, finally ending it with, "in the end, it's just trial and error. Once you have the ingredients, you just have to try and make a pill that works."

"I see," Alex said. "So, I will have to keep trying it for a long while, huh?"

"Unfortunately, yes," the Royal Alchemist said.

"Thank you for your teaching, Senior Lai," Alex bowed towards him a little.

"It's alright. My visit hasn't been all a waste of time either," the Royal Alchemist said as he waved the talisman in his hands.

He stood up to leave, and as he did, he said, "From what I understand, Little Ma had a lot of expectations on you. I hope you smash through every single one of them and reach heights neither she nor I have ever imagined."

Then, he left.

Alex remained in the room for a while longer contemplating on the information he had just received.

There was no secret technique, there was no book. He would have to do everything on his own from the ground up.

Now, Alex felt himself to have 2 choices.

First, he could try his best and convert all the Saint rank ingredients to their True rank equivalent, and then make a pill to heal himself.

Or, the perhaps easier option, rush through the True realm to reach the Saint realm and directly make the saint rank pill.

Finding Saint rank ingredients was perhaps going to be a bit too difficult of a task for him, but in either case, sitting on his ass wasn't going to help him.

No one was going to come to help him. If he wanted help, he would either need to go out on his own and find it or be strong enough so that he no longer needed the help.

Alex didn't do anything for the next 3 days aside from staying in his room and cultivating. While he did that, he contemplated on the things regarding the things he had learned.

Composition, Structure, Symmetry, and finally, Conversion. Suddenly learning more about these things had opened up a lot of ways for him to improve on his pills.

He couldn't wait to put all of this knowledge into making pills. However, now was not the time. Right now, he needed to focus on rescuing Pearl.

The Beasts' realm was not such an easy place to infiltrate that he could go in and out without having to worry for his life.

As far as he knew, this could possibly be the final days of his life. Still, Alex didn't let that stop him.

He wouldn't be able to live with himself if he let Pearl go through the ritual knowing that all the previous candidates had died. Either way, he was very close to death.

And for some reason, that did not scare him at all.

'Is that because I'm a clone? Because there is already the realm me living back in home?' he wondered.

Alex took out a pill and ate it. He let the energy of the pill dissipate in his stomach and instead of doing what it needed to do, he made the pill's energy convert into Qi in his body.

Next, it was time to breakthrough.

Using the Heaven grade technique of the Five Yang Divine Path, Alex started moving the Qi in his body in a certain path through his meridian.

The Qi originated from his naval area and would move through his entire body before coming back to his naval area.

He did that two or three more times when he heard an 'oomph' sound coming from deep within him.

He had broken through. While it wasn't as fast as pressing the breakthrough button, it was still very fast as it only took a bit less than a minute to breakthrough.

As far as he had come to learn, breaking through usually taken from a few minutes up to a few hours for most people, and that was in the self-tempering realm.

Alex felt a small increase in his Qi density, meaning his strength had likely increased as well.

He cultivated for half an hour to stabilize his cultivation base for the moment and stopped so he could train something else.

There were 2 things he could do aside from cultivating. The first was using his spiritual energy to form a weapon.

Alex did that for an hour or so. By now, he was extremely proficient in making the weapon itself. However, the weapon still had no physical properties, so it couldn't be held or influenced by Qi.

He suspected that it had something to do with Spiritual energy as well, but he couldn't figure it out at the moment.

'Is the information in the stele really not complete?' he thought.

Alex then stopped and went on to his next training. He wasn't sure if this was training or not, but he liked to call it one.

He closed his eyes and soon found himself floating on top of the Spiritual sea, looking at a bunch of floating threads of silver light around the Mountain.

After a week or so of having this, Alex had come to learn just a bit more about the silver mountain.

Every day, a certain amount of such silver threads would come off of the mountain. If he wanted to accelerate the process, he just had to keep on touching the mountain, but then he would start losing Spiritual energy to it.

Alex spent the next 5 minutes, going around, gathering the floating threads of silver light.

There were hundreds of them, but it didn't look like it affected the mountain in any way at all. It really would take him forever to completely dismantle the mountain into threads.

But then, what would he do with the threads? He hoped he would have an answer by then.

After he finished with that, Alex left his spiritual sea and started cultivating again. He cultivated the Yin technique for the entire night to keep his Yang in check.

He had to do that. After all, tomorrow was the day he infiltrated the beasts' realm.

Chapter 578: Re-Entering the Beasts' Realm

Early in the morning, Alex said bade farewell to the royal family and flew off to the southern forest.

The location, the formation platform was about 4 hours away from where he was, so once he was sufficiently far enough, he took out his boat and sped up.

Along the way, as the journey started getting monotonous, Alex fell into a lull and soon started thinking of what he was going to do inside.

As soon as he entered, he would fly in the direction of the palace. With the guards there, he would have to use his skills situationally to hide from them and get into the underground palace.

After that, it was just a matter of time before he found Pearl. After he found Pearl he would...

"What will I do?" he asked himself. He started doubting himself. 'Will Pearl even come with me? I... am not the person he bonded with, right?'

'I'm just a clone of a real person that's no longer here. Do I have the right to take away Pearl?' he thought.

These thoughts had been playing in his head for a while now, but he had never let it surface. He had been keeping them hidden deep below.

However, now that he was getting close to Pearl, the doubts and feeling of impostor only got louder, and even when he didn't want to hear it, he could hear it clearly.

'No,' Alex told himself. 'I still have the scar. If Pearl wasn't bonded with me, the scar would've never been there.'

"Yes, he's still bonded to me. I will teleport into the forest and make myself to the palace. Hopefully, I can see it if I go above the tree-line," Alex thought.

He still had doubts in the back of his mind, but he stored them away as he needed to focus on this mission.

Any wrong move and he would be caught by the beast, and likely killed by them for trying to steal their future king.

'I can't afford to make any mistakes,' Alex thought.

He reached the location and landed near the platform. He slowly stepped on it and took a deep breath before remembering what Fu Tao had done.

"They will know when I enter. I will have to immediately hide in the forest," he thought and opened his eyes.

He looked at the nodes where he was supposed to put in the energy and counted the strokes per node. Then, he released his energy.

He didn't immediately pour his Qi into the nodes, however, and instead kept it hovering in front of him.

As far as he remembered, he was supposed to put his energy at all nodes at once, so he decided to do it the best way he could.

In just a couple of seconds, a massive amount of Qi was released from his hands and it floated in front of him.

Since it was all Yang Qi, he could freely manipulate them in mid-air. He then separated the gathered energy into multiple, equal amounts and hovered them over the nodes as they would require.

He added more energy where he thought was needed and took away where he thought was too much.

If there was excess energy, he simply threw it away. Finally, once he believed he was ready, he let the energy fall onto the nodes.

The moment the yellow blobs of light touched the node, they immediately started filling the nodes at an incredible speed that shocked Alex himself.

'Isn't this too fast? Is something wrong?' he thought. Blue light shined in between the yellow light that slowly turned brighter and lighter until it turned white.

Once the white light encapsulated him completely, he felt the lurching feeling in the pits of his stomach that told him, he had teleported.

When he reappeared, the bright light lingered in his eyes for a while. While it did, he thought of what he needed to do next.

As the light around him died down, he made the decision that he was going to have to hide in some trees in the forest before making his way to the palace.

He needed to be extra careful so that he wasn't seen by an—

Alex looked around him. He wasn't in a forest at all.

He was now inside a massive cave with white walls made up of marble. The area shined from the light of the glowing crystal-like stalactites hanging from the ceiling.

He stood on top of a white formation platform, and in front of him were two beasts in True realms that were curiously looking at him to understand who had just teleported in.

"Fuck!" Alex thought. He had somehow teleported into the palace.

The two guards noticed something was wrong. Alex noticed them notice it as well.

Without even thinking, he shot out two back-to-back Heaven's Impact on the two beasts. Both of their eyes turned white and they slumped onto the ground.

Alex breathed heavily as he realized that was too close. He, fortunately, had enough reflex in him to attack the Lion and Leopard beasts as soon as he saw them.

Had he waited even a little more, they might have somehow notified the saint beasts.

Alex shook his head. 'Who knows, they might've done it already,' he thought.

Light gathered around him and soon he couldn't be seen at all. After going invisible, he reignited his aura, and soon it couldn't be felt as well.

"Just how the hell did I come in here? Don't I need a sort of medallion or badge of the beasts to use this line of teleportation?" he thought to himself.

Using the concealment technique, Alex was sure that he could easily go past the other True beasts that would be roaming around in the palace, but what about the Saint realm beasts?

Even with this, their Spiritual senses could easily find him if they even just sent it in his way.

He couldn't worry about that for now. 'I need to go find Pearl and leave as soon as I can,' he thought.

Alex ran through the hallway, as silent as he could be towards the room that was previously his room. When he reached it, he pushed it open, only to find nobody in there.

'Of course,' he thought. 'They won't let their future king live in such a place now that the prisoner is gone.'

He needed to start looking some place else, but he wasn't allowed to go to very many places as he had been a prisoner that was simply treated like a guest.

'Where can he be?' he thought. The place was way too big to randomly go around looking for Pearl, and thinking alone wasn't going to cut it.

He needed something more, something else. Whatever he was thinking of doing wasn't going to help him at all.

So, Alex stopped thinking. He suddenly stopped all thoughts and closed his eyes.

If his brain wasn't going to help, he needed to listen to his heart. If he couldn't think it, he needed to feel it.

As his thoughts slowly disappeared, a feeling appeared deep within him. It was a very mild feeling, but it was there. He could feel it, the connection.

The connection between him and Pearl.

He opened his eyes, and— "that way"— knew where to go.

Chapter 579: Family

Pearl felt lonely.

Ever since his only family, Alex, decided to leave him, he had felt lonely. When he had asked why Alex had left him, they told him that this was not his world and that he left for his.

His world was with the humans and they were his family, so he had to go back to his family. Pearl thought he was his family.

Was he not his family then?

The big puma was quite scary, and while the jaguar tried to not act scary, he still was. The jaguar sister made him feel loved, but she couldn't be with him all the time.

He liked the training and the cultivation during the start because Alex was there was to praise him. But now it just felt like a chore.

He no longer got the free time to simply stay around being a normal little cat, like he wished to do so these days.

He missed the days when he could just endlessly sleep in Alex's beast space. He didn't have to fight, cultivate, or learn to speak. He missed that.

He wished the grandmother cat would tell them all to leave him alone and let him do what he wanted to, but she didn't do that. She was rarely ever around these days.

She had told him she was his family. Then why was she not here for him? Did she lie to him?

Was he not her family as well?

Pearl felt lonely. And, in his loneliness, there was only one person he could go to meet.

Somebody who would never stop being his family. His mother.

By now, he had remembered the way to the open area of the cave where his mother stayed in. Or so they said, but she never really talked back.

Were they lying? Where was his mother even?

He had a vague memory of a smile on the face of a big cat that licked him while he was hurting all over the body.

That was, from what his memories told him when he met Alex the first time. He had no recollection of a time before that.

Was that cat his mother? He liked to believe so.

He reached the big stone stuck onto the ground that had something written on it. Writing, the jaguar sister had taught him a little about it.

But he couldn't read this language. This was not the writing he had been taught. Would she teach him this next? He didn't mind if it meant spending some time with her.

He did like her quite a lot.

Pearl crouched in front of the big stone and started meowing. He told his mother about how boring the training this morning was.

There wasn't anyone in the palace that could fight him now, so they had brought in stronger people. But they never fought seriously, and would always win against him.

He already didn't like fighting, and fighting someone that didn't fight seriously was very boring.

Pearl told her mother that he was bored and didn't want to go cultivate after this.

He waited for her to answer, but he could never hear her. The old Grandmother cat could hear his mother speak, then why couldn't he?

She probably spoke, but I just wasn't able to hear it, was what Pearl thought every time he listened to the silence.

He continued speaking with his mother, occasionally stopping for her to reply.

One of these times, she would speak, and he would hear her. He was sure about it.

So, he spoke to her again. He told her he felt lonely. He just wanted someone to be with him, call him by his name.

He just wanted to be with his family.

He waited for his mother to speak, but as always, she never di—

"Pearl!"

Someone suddenly called out his name. Pearl looked up with a surprised look on his face, trying to find his mother who had just called out his name. However, she wasn't there.

He then turned around and looked behind him to see a man standing there.

Did this man just call him? How did he know his name? He didn't think he had met the man before.

After all, when did he meet a man with short hair that was missing an arm? Never.

But, this feeling he was having. This was familiar.

"Pearl!" the man spoke with slight tears in his eyes.

Pearl decided to give in to the feeling and ask. "Meow!"

Alex smiled. "Yes, yes it's me," he said. "I came to save you."

"Meow!" Pearl got happy when he realized it was Alex but then cocked his head. Save me? He asked. Save me from what?

"Meow?" he asked.

"Save you from these beasts. They are trying to hurt you, so I came to take you away," he said.

"Tyek Mi?" Pearl tried to speak in human language, but he just couldn't speak it properly yet.

"Yes, I came to take you," Alex smiled with tears when he heard him speak.

"MEOW!" Pearl meowed harshly. Lies, he said. These beasts had never done anything to hurt him. They always treated him like he was the best. The only one who hurt him was in fact Alex himself, by leaving him.

"Meow!" Pearl told him. You left me, why did you leave me? He asked.

"I didn't leave you. They kicked me out of this place, and I couldn't find my way back," Alex said.

Pearl stopped talking and cocked his head again. "Riallee?" he asked.

"Yes, of course," Alex said. "Did they tell you that I left?"

"Yes," Pearl said, finally pronouncing something correctly.

"They lied. You are my family, I would never leave you," Alex said as he walked ahead and knelt next to Pearl before taking him in his arm in a one-handed hug.

"Meow?" Family? He asked.

"Yes," Alex said.

"Meow!" Pearl hugged him too as he let him know that he missed him.

Alex felt tears flowing down his eyes as he finally managed to reach Pearl. "Come, we need to leave now, or they will separate us again," he said.

"Meow," Pearl agreed. He wasn't sure why they were trying to kick out Alex, but whatever the reasoning was, Pearl wouldn't question it.

However... "Meow~" he asked. He wanted to know what would happen to this place after he left. As far as he remembered, this place needed him. Or so they told him.

"We don't need to worry about that for now. We don't have the time to," Alex said.

"Meow!" Pearl was ready to leave as well.

Alex stood up and turned around to leave, but suddenly, he felt a wave of spiritual sense go past him, most of which seemed to have been destroyed somehow.

In the next moment, a gust of air rose in front of Alex as three figures appeared.

There was the puma, the jaguar, and surprisingly a cheetah beast that Alex hadn't seen before.

However, given that it was giving off the aura of a Saint realm, he didn't dare underestimate him.

"Who are you?" they all got angry at once seeing Pearl in his hands. "Leave him at once!"

A wave of pressure came crashing onto Alex that only tried to crush him while keeping Pearl safe.

Alex however didn't fumble in this pressure. Instead, he simply stared back at them, with anger in his eyes.

Chapter 580: Confronting the Beasts

The Saint realm aura of the 3 beasts pressured over Alex to bring him down to the ground, but he stood still.

Their aura was unable to stop him from moving around as most people would be during such a situation.

The beast's aura was strong, but his body was perhaps stronger, simply based on their quality, so even though he couldn't do anything to fight against the beasts themselves, he could fight against their suppression.

He had been suppressed before about 2 weeks ago. The woman named Hao Ya had suppressed him, and even then he had been able to move around and even attack.

Compared to her who felt so very strong, these 3 beasts, they were just...

"Weak!" Alex said with a mocking smile on his face. These beasts weren't as strong as her.

"Who are you?" the jaguar asked. He had been ready to attack the intruder, but he didn't. With their next king on his hands, he needed to be absolutely sure about his attack before he sent it forth.

Given how the enemy wasn't being suppressed at all even though his cultivation base was only at True realms, they held a suspicion that the enemy was hiding his cultivation base.

Alex continued smiling with his lips, while his eyes showed no such emotion.

"Answer us, Who are you?!" the puma shouted at him.

"Eh? It hasn't even been a month and you've already forgotten me, huh?" Alex asked.

The two beasts turned to look at the puma, wondering if he knew anything about the human.

"Don't look at me. I've never met this human," the puma said while trying to remember if he was forgetting anything.

Less than a month ago... the only human he had seen in this time period was...

Alex's sleeves folded onto his arm, revealing the stub of his left elbow. However, that wasn't what he was showing.

The sleeves folded a little higher, revealing the cat paw on his upper arm. "Pearl, go inside."

"Meow!" Pearl said, immediately changing into a bunch of light, disappearing into his beast space.

"You!" the puma finally recognized.

"Young human, it's you?" the jaguar asked in surprise. He couldn't fathom that the little human that had been thrown out by the puma in a fit of rage was back.

"Yes, it's me," Alex said. "What? You didn't think I'll come back for my brother?"

"No, no, we wanted you to come back, young human. Brother puma sent you out wrongfully," the Jaguar said with a tone full of remorse.

The leopard just listened to the conversation as it seemed the two others knew the human in front of him.

He had been cultivating in his room until a few moments ago. It had been a couple of years for him since he started cultivating, and maybe a few dozen or maybe even a hundred years on the outside.

He normally wouldn't wake up as that wasn't his job, but recently, he heard too many noises of someone entering the realm, so he had gotten up to check.

Now that he looked at what was happening, he realized he had likely missed a lot of crucial things that he would have to ask about later.

"You wanted me to come back?" Alex asked.

"Of course," the jaguar said. "You're like a brother to the child, and have the White Tiger's blood in you. Of course, we wanted you to come back after the puma's impulsive decision."

The leopard looked to his right in shock. A human with their lord's blood? He really had to ask them next.

"Ho? You wanted me to return? Then did you go out looking for me? You should have known that I could not enter on my own right? You could've easily flown to my city to get me," Alex said as rage built up in his eyes.

"If you did, maybe my master would've still been alive. Did you come?" Alex asked.

"I—" the jaguar didn't know what to say. It was true that they thought that the puma was in the wrong after learning of the situation, but none of them cared enough about the human to fix the wronging.

They had basically decided to forget about it.

The puma started getting angry, as the blame was going to fall on him once again. So, decided to speak.

"Y—"

"Cease this at once, young human," a voice came from deep within the palace.

The 3 of the beasts immediately stopped speaking and bowed a little. "Lady Ren," they said.

Alex got a little apprehensive as well. After all, Lady Ren was one of the few beings whose upper limit he didn't know yet. He had thought of her to be at the peak of Saint realm when he had first arrived here, however, since then his world had been widened quite a bit.

By now, he was starting to believe that she might not actually be in the saint realm, but a realm further above it. He didn't voice it however as he didn't have any concrete evidence towards it.

"Are you going to stop me from saving Pearl, lady Ren?" Alex asked.

"Saving? He is in no danger here, young human. We are his friends and family, we would do nothing to hurt him," lady Ren said. She wasn't present at the moment, but her voice still carried the majesty that came with having a high cultivation base.

"Oh, then what about the ritual?" Alex asked.

"The ritual is something necessary to bring forth all the latent talent hidden inside the child's bloodline," Lady Ren said.

"What about the fact that the ritual has killed everyone in it? It has killed all of the candidates up until now?" Alex asked.

"That is unfortunate, but that won't happen with Pearl. He has some of the purest bloodlines of the White Tiger. He will surely survive the ritual," Lady Ren said. "I'm his great-grandmother, don't you think that I am worried too? Trust me, he will survive."

"Are you absolutely sure about that? Or is that just your hopes and expectations?" Alex questioned. "Are you absolutely sure that there is no chance Pearl will suffer any fatal damage in there? That just like the other candidates, he too won't die in there? Can you make me a genuine promise of that?"

Alex asked the questions, but he got nothing but silence in response.

That was the answer he was expecting to hear.

"You call yourself family, but you won't even come out face to face to get your great-grandson back," Alex said.

"I- I am not in a situation where I can come out as I wish to," Lady Ren said.

"I don't need to listen to nonsense anymore. I am leaving now," Alex said.

"No you aren't," the three beasts said at once. While Lady Ren was speaking, they respectfully waited for her to finish speaking.

Now that it looked like she did, and that Alex was about to leave, they finally sprung onto action.

The three beasts were very strong for Alex. A single hit and he would likely die. After all, what was a mere True disciple realm cultivator against Saint beasts?

Just because he could stand against their cultivation aura, didn't mean that he was immediately strong.

So, even as the beasts started to move, Alex started moving before them. He was sure that once he announced to leave, they would come attacking him, so he prepared for it.

Multiple Heaven's impacts flew off from his head towards the saint beasts. Each one of them was hit at least 3 times before Alex stopped.

The three beasts felt a headache coming as soon as they were hit with the mental energy that seemed to give them the sensation that they were burning on the inside.

The disorientation lasted for a couple of seconds, but that was all Alex needed. When they refocused their eyes, they could see the end phase of the ground closing under where Alex previously stood.

'What the hell just happened? What was that burning mental attack?' they all wondered.

They looked around trying to figure out where he had gone to, so they sent out their spiritual sense.

Before they could even locate Alex, a voice floated into their head.

"Go! Quickly!" it was an urgent-sounding voice belonging to Lady Ren.

"What's wrong, lady Ren?" the Jaguar asked. He had never heard a more worried voice of her.

"That human, he's found the treasury," she said. Immediately everyone realized what had happened as worry started forming in their hearts as well.

They weren't worried that the human found the treasury and would somehow steal the treasures inside.

No, they were worried that the human had found the treasury and would now die trying to steal the treasure inside.

They weren't worried for Alex, but rather Pearl that was inside his beast space. If Alex were to die, as a bonded beast, Pearl would die with him as well if he was inside him.

They needed to save him fast.

* * * * *

Alex had used the Earth Devouring technique to escape the place. The technique sent you very far away, depending on the density of the user's Qi.

With Alex's Qi being so dense now, he should have been sent at least a dozen kilometers away, but somehow he was still inside the palace.

Not only that, he was in a dead-end section of the palace with a door blocking his way.

Alex saw a bunch of formations on the door and realized that it was likely a seal.

'What is this place?' he wondered.