

Alchemy 601

Chapter 601: Pass

Alex was a little surprised, but he shrugged his shoulders and let her do whatever she wanted.

He looked at the iron cauldron in front of him, way better than the black cauldrons that he would find in the Crimson Empire.

He looked around and saw the lid propped against the wall not far from him. With a thought, the lid flew towards him and stayed to the side.

Then, he got to cleaning the cauldron. Who knew what sort of pills were made in this cauldron, so the first thing he needed to do was remove the powders that may be stuck on the inside of the cauldron.

Han Sha looked at him weirdly but didn't say anything. Every alchemist had their own thing that they would do before making a pill.

"So I should start with the common pill right?" he asked her.

Han Sha nodded and handed him the storage bag that had the ingredients for the common pill.

Alex increased the fire beneath the cauldron to prepare to make the Purple dream pill.

Han Sha's face suddenly turned weird. 'Why is he putting on the lid?' she asked himself. Not a single one of the different alchemists she knew would ever close the lid.

Alex ignored her and put in the first ingredient. He used his spiritual sense to look at what was happening inside and moved it around.

'Oh...!' Alex thought as he moved the ingredients. He realized that information of the ingredient, the shape of it to be exact, was being sent to Alex.

The shape was quite important for the structure of the pill, but he wasn't sure why he was getting that information. Did he get that information before?

Only then did he come to realize that this was the first time he made a common pill. All the other times he made a common pill, the memories he had weren't his own.

The experience felt so much like his own that he had mistaken it.

He would have to be extra careful now.

Just slightly off the timing, Alex put in the second ingredient. He hoped that was good enough to make enough mistakes that he didn't accidentally create an Immortal grade pill.

The information of this ingredient's shape was also getting back to him through his spiritual sense. In the back of his head, he was almost sure that if he slowed down the motion of the 2nd ingredient while lowering the heat at the same time, the shape of the powder would be a different shape.

This continued for all the different ingredients that he put in after that. The shape and a mild hint of what could be if he tweaked the recipe around floated into his head.

When he was done in the end, he took out the pill from the cauldron and gave it to Han Sha.

At the same time, he closed his eyes and started thinking of what had happened.

'The shapes... if I can change it... will I be able to better fit them together?' Alex wondered.

No-Gap. He remembered what the Royal Alchemist had told him. If he could remove the gap from a pill, its harmony would shoot up.

'I see,' he thought. His ability to improve a common pill that he thought was automatic was not. It was all based on his instinct and knowledge that he would have to use to make a recipe whose powders would fall into the perfect shape.

"67%!" Han Sha said with a bit of a shock. "You are not a bad Alchemist," she said.

Her record for a common pill was around 70% after reaching the True realm. On a normal day, however, it would be around 50-55%.

Seeing Alex casually make such a high-grade pill so casually hit her pride a little. 'And here I made an implication that he wasn't an Alchemist.'

She waited for Alex to start, but he kept his eyes closed. She wondered what he was doing, but then he opened his eyes.

He seemed to have a bit of understanding about something. 'Did he go through an enlightening? No way, that was too quick,' she thought.

"Will you continue?" she asked.

"Ah yes," Alex said and cleared the cauldron again before asking for the ingredients.

Han Sha handed it to him and waited for him to start.

Alex thought back to the recipe of the new pill called Clear Eyes0 Pill. According to the recipe, it was a pill that would help magnify the vision in one's eyes to see everything around them more clearly.

Alex had remembered the Royal Alchemist using a similar pill and had wondered if it was the same pill.

It was a useless pill to anyone with a spiritual sense, but to a normal cultivator, it could come in quite handy.

Alex waited for the cauldron to reach the appropriate temperature before putting in the first ingredient.

As he moved the ingredients around, Alex nodded to himself internally when no information of the shape appeared in his mind despite looking at the shape directly with his strained spiritual sense.

He understood that the Alchemy God's Knowledge technique was also responsible for what happened during common pill making aside from just his instincts.

Or, it would be better to say that the technique was honing his instinct to realize what he did.

He put away those thoughts for now and focused on making the Clear Eyes pill.

As Alex put the 2nd ingredient in, he wondered where he should make the mistake. It was certain that he didn't want to get a Silver badge, but he also didn't want to make enough mistakes to not even reach the Earth grade.

So, he only made a small mistake every 2 ingredients. He decided to make the rest of the mistake later on.

As the combination of powders swirled around inside the cauldron, finally it was time to gather them all and make the pill.

The pill forming process went normally, but when it came time for the Elemental Guidance technique to move the energy through the pill, he slackened off a bit.

Instead of giving his 100%, he gave 85%. With the mistakes he had made before, he was sure that he would get a good harmony that would fit where he wanted to be.

So, he opened the lid and pulled out the pill. When the pill fell on his hand, he smiled.

Perfect.

He gave it to Han Sha, who was about to snatch it from his hands if he didn't and put it in the Pill tester.

The pill tester looked a little different from what it would in the Crimson Empire, its shape was more cylindrical, rather than conical, it still had the same metal plate on the bottom, making it more or less the same item.

The fog rose on this one as well as it quickly crossed 10%. Han Sha watched as the fog rose until it passed 20% as well.

When it went past 25%, she looked shocked. Finally, it stopped at 30%.

She put down the pill tester and cupped her fist and bowed towards him a little. "Congratulations on becoming a True Earth Alchemist," she said.

"Thank you," Alex said as he stood up from the spot.

Han Sha looked a little surprised. "Are you not going to make the other 2 pills?" she asked.

"No need, I got what I wanted," Alex said and walked away.

He took back his storage bags and ring and walked out of the room with Han Sha.

"Thank you for your time, sister Han," Alex said with a little bow.

Han Sha nodded a little and looked to the side. One of the participants seems to have been done already.

"Please wait around, we will start the ceremony after all the tests are complete," she said.

Alex nodded and waited. Of the remaining girl and old man, the girl seemed to have failed as she walked out dejectedly, while the old man looked happy as though he had passed.

Once they were all there, a small ceremony took place to mark their entrance or ascension in rank in the Alchemist Guild.

Alex was given a Bronze badge that said 'True' at the front. He sent his spiritual sense into the badge and as expected, it worked exactly like a nameplate did, marking his name, age, current mission, and...

"Contribution point?" Alex looked surprised. He didn't know he would have to contribute to the guild, but on second thought, it made sense.

Han Sha gave a brief explanation of what they could and could not do.

One thing that caught his ears that made him intrigued was that most clients would give about 2 or 3 sets of ingredients per pill they wanted to get made.

If you could make the pill in one set at the harmony they demanded, you could keep the rest of the ingredients.

'That's quite nifty,' he thought.

Once the explanation was over, they all left. Alex decided to immediately get to work with making the pills for the various missions.

He went out to the reception hall, his new bronze badge on his chest. People who saw him now looked at him with an eye of respect all because of the badge.

Alex walked towards the board on the right of the hall with the various moving letters on it.

He attached his badge onto an engraving on the wooden wall, and suddenly he was aware of all the different missions he could take on.

The board only showed missions he was eligible to make, so he could choose any he wanted to.

When he chose a mission, his connection with the mission board suddenly vanished.

Chapter 602: Big Pearl

Alex tried to reconnect, but only a single piece of information came back to him.

-Please complete the current mission-

"Ah right, it's one mission at a time," Alex thought. He walked to an alchemy room that was free for anyone with a badge to use and sat down.

In less than a minute, a girl walked in with a storage bag. "Do you need an air, sir alchemist?" the girl asked.

"It's fine, you can leave," Alex said. The girl bowed and left. Alex closed the door and looked at the storage bag.

Inside the storage bag were 4 different types of items.

Ingredients, Recipe, Pill Tester, and Pill bottle.

Alex didn't necessarily have to use it all from this bag, but the guild gave it to him for convenience's sake.

Alex took out the recipe first of all and read the recipe. As soon as he glanced at it, the information was firmly lodged into his mind.

Then, he looked through the ingredients and made sure they were all good.

Finally, he looked into his badge again.

[

Name: Yu Ming

Age: 19

Rank: True Earth Alchemist

Contribution: 0

Current Mission: Prepare a Soul Lifting pill of 25% or higher.

]

25% or higher. Alex had 3 chances to get that level of pill given that there were 3 sets of ingredients in the storage bag.

Most people would likely try to make some pill that was higher in harmony, but Alex didn't care for that.

The only reason you would make a very high harmony pill when not required was to make a name for yourself amongst the civilians.

The clients could always request a specific alchemist to make a pill. For those times, you wanted yourself to have a reputation.

Alex wasn't going to be staying here for much longer. Gaining a reputation thus was the least of his worries.

He brought out his Golden Jade cauldron and started making the Soul Lifting pill.

In 1 hour, he ended up making all of the 3 pills with 3 different harmonies of 32%, 36%, and 37%.

For a pill whose recipe he had only seen just now, he had made the quite good quality of pills. If he continued with it, he would likely reach 40% very soon, but he didn't have the ingredients for that.

Alex took the 36% and 37% pills for himself and put the 32% pill in the pill bottle.

He went to the staff that worked like the reception, but only for the alchemists, and handed them the bag and his badge.

Once they confirmed that the mission was complete, they rewarded him for the mission.

36 True spirit stones. The reward was originally meant to be 40 spirit stones, but the guild took 10% of it.

Considering how much ease it was to find the job, Alex had no complaints whatsoever.

He kept the spirit stones into this bag and went to the board outside to take another mission.

It was barely in the early afternoon when he finished 3 missions, and amassed an extra 5 pills for himself.

After resting for a bit, he went for his 4th mission of the day. By the end of the day, he had easily made over 200 True Spirit stones amidst the various prices on each of the pills he made.

Even the staff members were very shocked to see him make so many pills in a single day.

Alex got away from the questioning by lying to them that he didn't need to make more than a single pill. That was still above average for most cases, but it wasn't as outrageous as making 20 True rank pills in 8 hours.

From a minor investigation, he had come to find out that most alchemists around his level usually did about 2 or 3 missions a day, which would have them make 6 to 9 pills a day most of the time.

After that, they wouldn't be able to make a single pill. Not only would they be mentally exhausted, but their Qi would also dry out as well. Especially if they were in the early True realms.

Alex wondered if his Qi reserve was larger than the average cultivator. He knew it was dense, but he had never thought if it was a greater amount as well.

'That must be it,' he thought.

Once he went back home, Alex continued cultivating. This time, he called out Pearl and had him cultivate alongside him.

Cuts appeared all over his body, but he didn't feel any pain. It was hard to feel any pain as the gap between the two of them was not only a major realm but also an entire 2 realms within it.

Alex wanted Pearl to immediately break through to the True realm, but he didn't have any monster cores on him to feed Pearl.

He would have to go to the forest for that, but he didn't want to. He felt it would be better for Pearl to break through with his cultivation rather than outside help for this important step.

So, Alex forced Pearl to cultivate day and night with an occasional spar to energize his body and help recycle his Qi.

On the 6th day, while Alex was focused on removing the Yang from his body that had accumulated over the past couple of days, he felt something stir aside from him.

So, he stopped and turned around to check Pearl. When he did, he saw that Pearl was starting to break through.

Immediately, Alex pulled in all the Yang that he was emanating, no matter how little he was.

Then, he stepped to the side and waited for Pearl to be done.

After an hour more, he felt something change in Pearl and suddenly, a bright golden light exploded from him.

The light turned into golden motes that hung in the air as it slowly drifted downwards like it were confetti celebrating Pearl's advancement to the True Realm.

"Haha, Pearl you did it. You—" suddenly he stopped. Alex's eyes went wide as a silhouette of a beast appeared behind Pearl.

It was about 2 meters tall and 3 meters long. It looked somewhat like Pearl, but not entirely. The face of the beast didn't look cat-like which Pearl had.

Also, the main difference was the fact that the beast's white body had black stripes all over it.

'The White Tiger!' Alex looked at the heavenly beast's silhouette with absolute shock.

The silhouette moved a little as it drooped down to touch Pearl with his nose, and suddenly, it turned into a bright light that converged back onto Pearl.

Then... Pearl changed. His body glowed white and his size started to increase. He got bigger and bigger until he stopped.

If his original size was a little smaller than a house cat, his new size came to be about twice what a normal house cat would be.

If this continued, Alex suspected by Saint rank, Pearl's body would reach the size of his mother. After that, his body would reach the size of Lady Ren.

Finally, Pearl opened his eyes. Bright golden pupils stared directly at Alex as Pearl opened his mouth to speak.

"Breakthrough successful?" he asked in almost perfect pronunciation.

"Yes, yes, you did it," Alex said as he walked up to him and hugged him. Alex swiped his hands on Pearl's back, feeling his new, strong body.

"Wow, you are so big now," he said, still a little unsure if he liked the change or not.

"Brother not like change?" Pearl asked.

"Oh no, it's—"

"Pearl change," Pearl said and immediately his body shone with white light as his body shrunk down to the size of what he originally was, perhaps even a finger or two smaller.

"What? You can change? How?" Alex asked with nothing but surprise in his voice. He had read so many books about beasts, spent 2 months with nothing but beasts, and somehow there was no information about beasts being able to change size.

"Pearl just knows how," Pearl said. The information that he could do came from the memories he inherited from his parents.

"Can you change back?" Alex asked.

Pearl nodded and changed back to become a bigger cat that had lost its childlike features.

"And again?"

Pearl changed back to his childlike self.

Alex smiled. "Great, thankfully you haven't lost your cuteness," he said as he rubbed Pearl's little head.

"Alright, get bigger. Let's see how you can fight with a bigger body."

The room was small, and would most likely take damage if the two of them seriously fought, so Alex put on a barrier formation before fighting.

The barrier wasn't strong enough to stop the two of them, but it would be fine as long as it blocked a single attack.

Alex fought Pearl multiple times throughout the day. He even skipped going to the guild for the day and just fought Pearl all day long.

He had Pearl fight as small Pearl, or as big Pearl, or have him change in and out to confuse the opponent.

Alex didn't want to see how strong Pearl had gotten or teach him how to fight. All he wanted to do was have him get used to his new body.

Once night came, he finally stopped and cultivated overnight. The next morning, they trained for a little while before Alex left to the guild once more.

He wanted to make as much money as he could. At first, he was incredibly happy that he could make so much money in such little time.

But when he realized that he needed to make pills of his own to sell, and would have to thus buy ingredients like everyone else, he got dejected.

No matter how much he earned, it was never enough.

Chapter 603: Riverweed Auction

2 days later, it was the day of the Auction. Alex kept the tiny Pearl, who was smaller than normal in his robes, with just his head poking out, and walked towards the auction house.

The Three Faction auction house was apparently the biggest auction house in the Riverweed town and the surrounding other 3 towns that were 3 hours carriage journey from here.

On the day of the auction, major sects and families from all over the 4 towns came to gather in the Three Factions Alliance auction house.

Many people expected a lot of great things to be found in the auction house today, but Alex didn't. He just hoped to find one of the 10 remaining ingredients of the True rank healing pill that he was to make.

Not that he would mind coming across a special weapon or artifacts.

The auction house had already opened by the time he arrived, so he quickly entered it.

He likely could've gotten a better seating if he used his True Earth alchemist badge to show off a little, but he didn't need it.

He was here truly just to see how his pills would sell. After all, he really needed the money to make more pills.

Since he was going to be away from the Northern forest, he needed money to buy ingredients to practice alchemy.

For the first time, he was going to have to suffer in his alchemy progress in terms of ingredients.

Hopefully, not by much.

The auction hall was rather large, with a sound-dampening formation carved onto all the metal walls on the sides.

The stage was bright with light from all directions being produced by some sort of light-producing artifact, different from the lanterns he was used to.

Alex could see about 30 rows of seats along nearly 50 columns. Aside from that, there were more than 100 seats for the rich and famous up above.

Aside from the elders from the many nearby sects, and merchants, Alex wondered who else would be eligible to sit there.

Alex found himself a seat at the lower back corner of the hall and waited for it all to start.

As he expected, an attractive girl in a beautiful red robe walked to the front and introduced herself as the auctioneer for the day.

Alex sighed. It was always a beautiful girl who ran the auction. That, or an old man who would give the guests a sense of trust in the items that were being auctioned.

This was certainly working, as a group of men got unusually excited when they saw the girl walk out onto the stage.

A few minutes more and the girl started introducing items one by one.

A formation plate that could capture any beast under the Meridian Tempering realm.

A talisman that exploded with the power of True Master 2nd realm expert.

A pill that could make a woman's body more bountiful and even help increase fertility for up to 3 days.

A puppet that had strength equivalent to that of a Mind Tempering 1st realm, but the defense of a True Disciple 1st realm.

An armor that used water energy to freeze the attacker's weapons and fists.

A flute that could make anyone under the 1st True Disciple realm fall asleep.

A set of 2 talismans that could be used to communicate over 2000 kilometers away.

An Azure Silverbeak that was no more than 2 years old, and could be made into a bonded beast.

One after another, the girl at the stage announced the item she was auctioning, and in just a couple of bids, the amount would reach dozens of True Spirit stones.

The latest item, a pair of daggers, suitable for someone whose cultivation method was Metal aligned, sold for over 50 True Spirit stones.

Being a True Earth grade artifact, Alex was surprised it didn't sell for more. It must've been the fact that not many people used daggers at all to make the bids go high.

Finally, the pills he gave to the Alchemist Guild to pass along to the auction house were being sold.

From 20, all the way to 60 True Spirit stones. The 50 True-Earth grade pills he gave amassed him about 2500 coins in just an hour.

He wished he could give the other 80 or so pills he was ready to sell too, but that would be gaining too much attention.

He currently had no backing aside from the Alchemist guild, and if someone from the alchemist guild came to hurt him, he couldn't save himself.

Most of the pills he sold were ones that he had no use for. They included pills that helped in cultivation, changed faces, or increased one's resistance or immunity to poison.

There were also other miscellaneous pills, but not a single one of those included pills that would be used in healing.

He had already come to understand how significantly important it was to stock up on pills that healed, rather than pills that did any other thing.

Once his pills were sold, the other alchemist's pills were also sold.

A few of those Alchemists did sell healing pills, unlike Alex, but it was understandable. Not everyone had the same experience as him and prioritized the same thing.

He was starting to get bored and looked around a bit when he heard two men behind him bid for the healing pills.

"53 True spirit stones."

Alex sent his spiritual sense behind him to gently touch the man's aura and recognized that he was a True Disciple realm cultivator of slightly higher cultivation than him.

Going past that, he checked the person and saw that he was injured on his left shoulder, and likely needed the healing pill.

At 66 True Spirit stones, the man finally had to step down to some other person in the lower area and took the loss.

"It's okay, senior brother. We can have the alchemists make one for you," a woman spoke softly from next to him.

"Yes, I know, but it would cost a lot," the man said with as little emotion as he could muster, but Alex could hear the pain in his voice. 66 True spirit stones seemed to be a figure he wasn't able to bring out quite as easily.

Having to have an alchemist make one would likely cost him about the same price, if not higher.

"Once you get healed, you can go back to the northern forest at the end of the week and earn a lot more," the girl said.

The man gave a heavy sigh and nodded. "Yes, I can't let this depress me," he said. "If only we were in the capital, I'm sure the princess of the Shen clan could've healed me with a simple gesture."

'Shen clan?' Alex thought. 'Isn't that one of the 7 colors clan? Shen should be the Blue one, right?'

"If you really want that much luck, why don't you go meet the Royal princess and have her use the healing orb on you? That could heal you in no time," the girl said.

"Sure it could. But I w—"

Suddenly, Alex turned around, making the two of them stop speaking.

"I'm so sorry, but I couldn't help but overhear your talk about this Healing orb. Would you mind explaining a bit more about it?" he asked.

He really didn't want to interfere and let them know he was listening, but the talk about the Shen girl being able to heal and the Wei family princess with the healing orb was too tempting of a talk.

"Who are you?" the man's eyes darkened. No one really liked being eavesdropped upon. The man was especially angry that it was done by someone with less age and cultivation than him.

"Forgiveness, brother," Alex said. "I'm just a man in need of healing." He finally showed his stump to the man.

The man's eyes got less dangerous, but he still held a bit of anger in them.

Alex suddenly pulled out a pill bottle and offered it to the man. "I am really sorry for listening in on your conversation, but I really need to know. Please take this 22% Flesh Reverting pill as a token of sincerity."

The blue-dotted, white ceramic bottle suddenly looked very tempting to the man. It wasn't a 32% Swift Healing pill that was just sold, but it would be enough for him.

"Is this really a healing pill?" the man asked suspiciously.

Chapter 604: New Destination

Alex could see the man's eyes looking suspiciously at the pill he had taken from his hand. He was looking inside the pill bottle, wondering if he was being duped somehow.

Alex sighed. "I have no reason to lie, brother," he said as he pulled out the badge he had been hiding in his robes.

Pearl shuffled a little in his robes to let the badge pass through, and it came out easily, which Alex hid in his palm, only visible to the man and woman.

A bronze badge with leaves carved around the edges, and the words 'True' written on it in the center.

A True Earth Alchemist badge.

The man's eyes instantly went wide, and he dropped all sense of hostility from his body and eyes.

Instead, he immediately cupped his hands in greeting, wincing a little when the pain in his left shoulder plate flared a bit, but he didn't let it sound through him.

"Forgive me for my rudeness, sir alchemist. I will answer every question you have," the man said, while at the time, putting the pill into his storage bag, fearing Alex would ask it back.

Alex ignored that. A 22% pill was just above trash in his eyes. Still, if it could help him gain some information that could help him, it would be more worth it than if he had just sold it instead.

The man went on to explain.

The Shen family was one of the 7 great families of the empire, whose members usually had roots that mostly aligned with the water element. One of the skills they had was a water skill that could heal someone's wound with just a gesture of their hands.

"Do you know if they can heal a cut-off limb like mine?" he asked.

The man looked towards the woman for a bit who shook her head. "I don't believe that is possible anymore, sir alchemist," he said.

"Anymore?" Alex looked at him with a curious look. "What happened that caused the healing to not be possible now?"

"You must not have heard, sir Alchemist. About 2 months or so ago, the 7 families gathered their best, along with some other talented individuals from the empire, and had them enter a True realm."

"However, tragedy struck, and not a single one of them returned," the man said.

'Ah! Those men that entered the beast realm while I was in there. Right, Fu Tao did say that.' Alex remembered.

"So, the person who could heal was sent there too?" Alex asked.

"Unfortunately, yes," the man said. "I've heard the news the sister of the Shen young lady also has learned the same skill, but her proficiency certainly wouldn't have reached the same level, so I do not know if healing a stump like yours is possible or not."

"I see," Alex said. That was a bit of bad luck.

"What about this healing orb? You said the Wei family has it?" Alex asked.

"Ah, yes," the man nodded. "Everyone knows about it, so it's no secret. The royal family has a healing orb that is handed down to the princess every generation, I hear."

"Oh, and can it heal my stump?" Alex asked.

"Uh... that I'm not knowledgeable on, sir alchemist," the man said. "After all, the only ones that are allowed to get a use of that orb is someone who is a Lightsworn."

Lightsworn. Alex had read about them not long ago. They were a group of individuals, directly under the royal emperor who performed missions and kept peace in the land.

They were more than just a police force, however. Being under the emperor himself, they were the Judge, jury, and executioner in most cases.

Fortunately, they had to say an oath to the heavens, promising to never go against what was kind and just, to always protect the people of the empire.

After swearing an oath to the Luminance empire, the person would become a Lightsworn.

"So, I will have to ask a Lightsworn himself, huh?" he asked.

"I'm afraid you will have to do at least that," the man said.

Alex thought for a bit. It seemed he would have to get rid of his plans to travel to a city close by and instead directly go to the capital itself.

With both the Shen girl there and this healing orb there, he wanted to weigh upon his luck to get his arm back.

Not only that, he was certain that the capital would have a lot of ingredients for him to buy, and a lot more information for him to learn from.

The auction lasted for a while longer as better and better items started getting auctioned.

One of the items being auctioned was even a True Heaven grade cauldron that made him want to buy it, but he stopped himself.

For now, the one his master gave him would suffice.

In the end, he didn't buy anything. The auction ended, and Alex walked out with a newfound plan.

Go to Radiant City, the capital of the Luminance empire.

Instead of going anywhere else, Alex directly went to the southwestern section of the town where the caravans lined up in front of the river that gave the town its name, Riverweed.

He confirmed that there was a caravan that would leave around 3 pm in the afternoon. The caravan would only go about 2 cities over, but Alex was prepared for that.

The road to the capital was long and would take him multiple days. He would take it slow for now.

He returned back to his home for a bit before going back to the place where he rented the place almost 2 weeks ago.

He returned back the key and then made his way to the Alchemist Guild.

He walked past the Formation guild that was close to the Alchemist Guild. He had seen it before, along with the other 2 major guilds.

He wanted to get in here but had later decided not to split his attention across multiple things when all he needed to focus on right now was getting strong and getting his arm back.

The search for getting his arm wasn't just for himself. It was for his master, and his martial uncle, as well as the many that would walk around limbless just because there wasn't a cure for it at the moment.

He shook his head and went to the alchemist guild. He took the 2500 coins he got from the auction and asked to make sure he could leave anywhere else he wanted to.

The receptionist had only smiled and said yes.

Alex nodded and left the guild. There was only two places he needed to go to before going back to the caravan.

First, he entered the restaurant and had the most extravagant meal they had prepared.

Having focused on making pills for the last week or so, he had forgotten about coming here to eat.

His physique had improved a lot, but he still looked quite weak when judged simply visually.

After he finished eating it, he left the restaurant and walked to the place where the players were staying.

He wanted to make sure they were all fine, so he went to check on them. The man from before had been there and was surprised when he saw Alex walk there.

Alex sent out his spiritual sense to the house and saw that there were nearly half of the players missing.

He smiled. He took out 50 True spirit stones and handed them to the man. "For them," he said, and then brought out 10 more spirit stones which he handed to the man and woman, as thanks for looking after the players.

The two of them rejected the spirit stones, but Alex simply waved his hands and left.

Now that there was nothing else to do in this city, Alex went to the caravan.

With 15 minutes to spare, he got onto one of the carriages where only a few people could stay.

Alex saw a man and a woman with their less than 5-year-old daughter sit on one end of the carriage, while Alex sat alone on the other end, looking at the empty seat in front of him.

After nearly 10 minutes, the door of the carriage opened, sending light into the rather dark inside.

A young man jumped in and settled onto the seat in front of Alex, swiping his hair around.

He looked around and gave an embarrassed smile as he said, "I hope I wasn't the one that made the caravan wait."

Chapter 605: Shen Jing

Alex looked at the young man in front of him with a slight curiosity in his eyes.

The man who had just appeared wore a stark white robe with almost robe with no other colors.

Two golden earrings hung from the side of his ears that had a circular shape with some spikes appearing out of it. Calling it a golden ball with spikes would be enough to describe the jewelry to someone.

His blonde hair cascaded down below his shoulders and ended on black tips as if that part alone was dyed for some reason.

He was most likely two-finger taller than Alex, but for some reason, Alex felt the height to be actually larger.

His fair body skin had no blemishes at all, and his constantly smiling face made him look gentle as well.

However, the most curious thing about him was that he had no cultivation base at all. Almost as if he were a mortal.

Alex's first thought was that this man was an immortal, someone whose cultivation base was so high he couldn't sense it at all.

However, he immediately felt like slapping himself on the face. He had just learned that immortals couldn't walk out in the open freely not long ago.

The skies would split open to punish them if they even showed themselves. Lady Ren was only surviving by staying hidden underneath a massive Saint Spirit vein line in addition to a bunch of formations to keep her aura hidden.

The man in front of him was likely using a cultivation technique to hide his aura. His technique must have been one of the good ones to make him hide his aura so easily.

The man noticed Alex staring at him and smiled at him.

"Greetings little brother, where are you headed to?" the man asked.

"To Silverlead city for now," Alex said, not elaborating any further to the stranger.

The carriage started moving and soon the caravan was on its way to the next town.

The blonde-haired man's smile remained on his face, not leaving it once. That gave Ning a bit of a weird feeling like he should avoid this man.

The carriage rattled around for about 5 minutes, and the man finally stopped looking toward Alex and instead turned to a family of 3 to the side.

"What's your name, little girl?" he asked the girl that was maybe 4 years old.

"Shu Xue," the girl said softly, her parents encouraging her from the side to ask the man's name.

"What is your name, mister?" she asked.

"My name? It's... Shen Jing," the man said.

Alex's eyes immediately narrowed as a thought crossed his head. 'Shen Jing? SHEN! As in the Shen clan? The same one I'm going towards?' he thought.

There was no way things could be this coincidental, but he couldn't tell that for sure. After all, he had quite a bit of luck from everything he had gotten until now.

"Little Xue, ask this brother what his name is?" the young man named Shen said.

"Big brother, what is your name?" the little girl asked.

Alex couldn't help but put on a smile as he turned toward the young girl. "Little sister, my name is Yu Ming," he said.

"Yu... Ming..." the girl said to herself as if trying to try out the name on her tongue.

"And what's in Silverlead city for little brother Yu Ming?" Shen Jing asked.

"For now, it's just a midpoint in my journey," Alex said. "Where is senior brother Shen headed to?"

"Me? I don't know. I'm just going where fate takes me, I guess," The man said.

"I have a question to ask of you, brother Shen," Alex said, unable to contain his curiosity.

"How about you ask me one and I'll ask you one?" Shen Jing said.

Alex took a deep breath and nodded. "Are you from the Shen family?" he asked.

"Uhh... obviously. My family is Shen, isn't it?" the man asked with a raised eyebrow.

"So you are from the great Shen family," Alex shouted. He couldn't believe his luck.

Shen Jing looked at him with an innocent eye and asked, "Great Shen family? What's that?"

"Eh? Are you not from the Great Shen family?" Alex repeated the question.

"I think there is a misunderstanding here. I am from a Shen family, while you seem to be asking about a family that is more popular," Shen Jing said.

"So... you're not from the Shen family? One of the 7 colors of the Empire?" Alex asked.

"Oh, no. You seem to really be talking about an actual Shen family that's quite popular. Unfortunately, I'm not from that family," he said.

"I see," Alex said, his hopes sinking back a little. "I'm surprised you don't know about that family. It's quite popular in the empire."

"I don't really know much about the empire," Shen Jing said.

'A player?' Alex suspected now. The only person who wouldn't know about the Luminance empire would be someone that came from outside of it.

Given how the beast realm blocked the Crimson Empire from entering, and the other continents had no way of coming here, only a player could have possibly been someone that would not know about the empire at this point.

"You should read some books, brother Shen. Learning about the empire will help you a bit," Alex said.

Shen Jing immediately put up an irritated face. "No, I hate reading," he said.

Alex was about to ask something when Shen Jing started speaking. "Since I've answered a question of yours, you should answer one of mine," he said.

Alex nodded and waited for the question.

Shen Jing pointed at Alex's stump and asked, "What's the story behind that?"

Alex unconsciously grabbed his left arm and said, "it got cut during a fight in my city. Bandits attacked us, and I ended up having to fight a particularly strong one."

"Hah, you mean you were just weak, right?" Shen Jing said. That hit a nerve in Alex, but he took a deep breath to control his anger.

"If you are a man, you will have to be strong. Well, you have to be strong if you are a woman too, but since you're a man this works for you," Shen Jing said.

"Otherwise, how else are you going to protect your family? Your mother, your father, your brothers and sisters, your friends, disciples, master."

Alex felt coldness pass through him when he said the last word. If only he had indeed been stronger, Ma Rong would have still been alive. Wen Cheng's arms would've still been okay.

If only he had been stronger.

"With how weak you are, will you even be able to protect that cat of yours?" Shen Jing asked.

"HuH? How do you know about that?" Alex immediately got defensive. Out of nowhere, the man had suddenly known about Pearl. Alex wondered if this was—

Alex saw the man pointing at his chest. Alex looked down and saw Pearl poking his head through the robes.

'Ah,' he thought.

Shen Jing waved his hands towards Pearl.

"Meow!" Pearl greeted Shen Jing out of nowhere.

"Meow to you too, little fella. What's your name?" Shen Jing asked.

Alex's eyes started going wide. 'Pearl don't ans—' he tried to tell Pearl, however, he was a step too late.

"Pearl!" Pearl said out loud, shocking the family of 3 on the side. They had never seen a beast talk before in their life, and seeing one now in such a confined corner scared them.

"Come here," Shen Jing said as he opened his palm.

For some reason, as if hypnotized, Pearl suddenly jumped out of Alex's robes and onto the man's hands.

Alex couldn't even stop him at all. He started worrying. What was he to do now? Should he fight the man to keep the knowledge about Pearl a secret? What about the family?

Pearl smiled as the man rubbed his head and back. "You are amazing, Pearl," he said.

"Meow!" Pearl said happily. A small thought floated into Alex's mind.

"He's not a bad human, brother," Pearl told him in his mind directly. Alex didn't know if he should trust Pearl at the moment or not.

Shen Jing turned his head to the side and saw the family still cowering a little. Except for the little girl who was simply fascinated by a talking cat.

Shen Jing gave a reassuring smile to the family, and said, "don't worry. He's just a talented little cat. He won't hurt anyone."

He then called over the little girl, who ran off towards him.

"Put your hands forward," Shen Jing said, and the girl followed. He then placed Pearl on top of her hands. Pearl barely had any place to step on hands and jumped to her shoulders which were a little broader.

"Can you help teach my little friend a few more words?" Shen Jing asked.

The girl nodded. "Alright, go ask your father and mother for help as well," Shen Jing said and the girl left to her corner with Pearl.

He then turned around to Alex and chuckled a little. "No need to panic, little brother. I won't hurt you guys," he said. Alex could hear all the implications in his words.

It wasn't that he couldn't hurt him, but that he wouldn't. Alex needed to be absolutely sure to do nothing that would antagonize this man.

"So? Are you going to heal that arm or not?" Shen Jing asked suddenly.

"I'm going to," Alex said.

Shen Jing made a weird face and asked, "Well, aren't you an Alchemist? You should have already healed your arm by now."

Chapter 606: Fun

Alex's eyes narrowed once again. 'How does he know I'm an alchemist?' he wondered.

He looked down upon himself to see if there was anything that could give it away when he saw the Alchemist badge popping out of his robes.

'Pearl must've pulled it out when he jumped,' He thought as he looked to the side at Pearl. He was having fun with the little girl.

Alex had already told him not to hurt the little girl, so there was nothing to worry about with Pearl.

"Uhm, just because I'm an Alchemist, it doesn't mean I can heal myself," Alex said.

"Is that so? I thought Alchemists could do anything they wanted, similar to formation makers, Talisman creators, and Artifact crafter," Shen Jing said.

"It's true that they have a lot of potentials to do anything, but that doesn't mean every alchemist can make whatever they want," Alex said.

"Yes, I know that, but with a bit of time and practice, it should be possible right?" Shen Jing said.

"Not really," Alex said. "Those will help, but having knowledge of what you are doing is more important if you want to do something quickly."

"If I were looking for the knowledge, I doubt anything would help me learn better than self-study with a bit of outside help. But if what I want is my arm back, it's better for me to rely on outside helpfully," Alex said.

"You mean a recipe?" Shen Jing asked.

"Yes," Alex nodded.

"So you don't have any recipe to heal yourself?" Shen Jing asked.

Alex shook his head. "Not at the moment. I do have one, but making that is out of my league for now. The actual recipe that will help me right now is incomplete," he said.

"Does no one else have that sort of pill?" Shen Jing asked.

"Maybe," Alex said. "I didn't find much in that town, but that was a backwater town. Which is why I'm going to the capital to see if such pills already exist."

"If they don't exist, I also have the Shen great family which could heal me, and the royal princess who also could. But for that I will have to be a Lightsworn apparently," Alex said.

"Ooh, what's a Lightsworn?" Shen Jing asked curiously.

"Protectors and guards of the empire, I hear," Alex said.

"Do you admire them?" Shen Jing asked.

"Haha, no," Alex said. "I only just learned about them today. I plan on joining them, however. That might be one way to heal my arm."

"Hmm... Lightsworn. Sounds fun. I will join too," Shen Jing said.

The carriage rattled as the sounds of people walking on the side of the caravan sounded.

"Oh, what does that say?" Shen Jing suddenly asked.

Alex turned outside the window and saw a wooden sign on the side of the road with some words on it.

"Bullfly town 30 kilometers away. Firecrest town, 103 kilometers away. Silverleaf City, 302 kilometers away.

Shen Jing nodded as he looked outside. "We will likely reach the town by sundown, then Harecrest town by tomorrow, and Silverleaf City 3 days later," Shen Jing said.

"How far away is the capital?" he asked.

Alex made some simple estimation in his head based on the map and the sizes there before saying, "About 9000 kilometers."

"Oh wow, that's far, isn't it? Don't you think it will be faster to just fly there? I'm sure you can reach the capital in 3 days if you do," Shen Jing said.

Alex didn't doubt it. He had even thought of it, but he shook his head.

"I am a bit new to this place. I want to learn a bit more about the land and its culture before I arrive at the capital. I know what being a naive, village boy does to one in unfamiliar places," he said.

"That's not a bad idea," Shen Jing said with his hands on his chin. "I think I'm starting to like you, little brother. You know what? Forget about getting strong and just focus on getting your arm back."

Shen Jing said what could only be taken as sarcastic, but for some reason, he sounded sincere. Alex wondered why he was saying that. Was there a good enough reason for him to stop proceeding with his cultivation?

Alex shook his head and forgot about it. He wasn't going to suddenly stop getting strong. In fact, Shen Jing was the weird one for even suggesting it.

'One moment he mocks me for being weak, and another moment he says I don't need to get strong. Does he have something wrong with his head or what?' Alex thought.

The carriage rattled as it went along for a bit more, and darkness soon veiled the world.

Not long after, they reached the Bullfly town, where they stopped for an hour or two before leaving.

The horses pulling the carriage were spirit beasts, so they didn't need to rest at all, and could pull as long as they had Qi.

Shen Jing suddenly pushed open the door and jumped out. Alex looked at him in surprise. He hadn't said anything for a while now, simply sleeping in the carriage with his eyes shut, and now he suddenly jumped out.

"Aah, it's not very good to sit in one place continuously," he said. "Little brother, come on out, or you will start getting backaches too."

Alex looked at him with narrowed eyes. "I'm fine," he said.

"Come on! Stretch your legs a bit. No need to sit inside forever," Shen Jing said. "Also, you might find something fun up ahead."

Alex's eyes changed again.

Fun.

Shen Jing had some sort of implication on that word that he didn't immediately catch.

His voice got a little cold as he asked, "What's up ahead?"

Shen Jing knew he had caught Ning's attention and smiled, "that's a surprise for you."

Alex hesitated for a bit. Was this some sort of trap? Was Shen Jing going to kill him up ahead?

"Don't worry!" Shen Jing said, seeing Alex's eyes full of hesitation. Then, his voice changed such that Alex could feel some sort of energy behind it.

"You know I could've killed you anytime if I wanted to by now," Shen Jing said.

Alex jumped out. He wasn't sure what Shen Jing wanted of him, but he was sure about one thing now. Shen Jing didn't want to kill him.

"Pearl, stay here okay? Your brother and I will go ahead for a little while," Shen Jing said, his jovial voice returning to him.

The two of them suddenly flew away. Alex flew as fast as he could, but Shen Jing seemed to be casually cruising through the air.

This man... he was either a very high True realm cultivator, or more likely, a Saint realm cultivator.

Alex had to be careful of him.

"Down there," Shen Jing pointed, and Alex looked below. He saw a bunch of people grouped up below him, and the group of people saw him too.

Alex's eyes went wide.

"Bandits?" he said out loud.

"Yes, and they see you now," Shen Jing's voice drifted in his ear, but his body was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly, the bandits flew up towards him.

Alex got angry. "You bastard! You really did bring me here to kill me."

Chapter 607: Using the Sword

Alex sent his spiritual sense around, but Shen Jing was nowhere near to be seen. So, he sent them downward, towards the group of bandits flying towards him.

Without even checking at them, he could tell they were strong. Much stronger than the ones that you could find in the routes of Crimson Empire.

They were very much possibly on the same level as the bandits that invaded the Scarlet city.

His wave of spiritual sense went past them and it confirmed it. Of the 30 flying bandits, the weakest one was at True Disciple 5th realm, and the strongest one of them... was at True Lord 7th realm.

This was very bad.

His main priority was to survive. Shen Jing had brought him here to kill him, so Alex thought of instead going back to the caravan.

'No, they will follow me there,' he thought. If they did, not only would they kill him, they would likely hurt everyone in there.

Alex had already done a scan of the caravan and had known that the strongest protector in there was a True Master 3rd realm girl, along with a few of her colleagues.

Those would surely not win against these bandits. Alex was the strongest person in that caravan and now, he was separated.

"Was that what Shen Jing wanted? To separate me from the group so they can deal with me alone?" Alex wondered.

He stopped. He had no more time to give to thoughts. Since the bandits were bringing a fight to him, he would bring a fight to them.

Light flashed as a sword appeared in his right hand.

It was a meter and a half long sword, with about 30 centimeters long hilt. The blade itself was about the size of his 2 fingers, that curved a little at the front.

The edge on the blade was so sharp that Alex wouldn't doubt if someone said that light itself could be cut with it.

Alex put the sword in front of him. The silver blade pointed at the bandits, his hand on the stark white hilt, stopped by the bronze, circular cross guard.

Then, he took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

HAH~

Suddenly, light flared behind him illuminating everything in the night. He had released so much Yang energy behind him that it looked like a sun had appeared out of nowhere.

The bandits looked at him in the sky, the sun hidden only by his shadow. And then, the shadow moved.

The bandits saw nothing for a moment. The man had disappeared from the sky, leaving the blinding light in the sky for 3 seconds before it disappeared.

At that time, they heard multiple sounds of people gasping, but no one screamed.

When their visions came back to them a second later, they realized why there had been no scream.

As bodies fell to the ground in pieces more than one, they realized that their comrades had been cut through before they could even make a noise.

It was very much likely that they didn't even see their deaths coming.

Alex huffed a little far away. He had released a bit too much energy at once and over-exerted himself to kill 8 of the bandits at once.

Still, his eyes flashed with a cold light as they constantly looked at the bandits for an opening.

It had been a while since he fought. In fact, now that he thought about it, this was the first time he was actually fighting. So, he was a little rusty, but the experience in his mind made the fighting easy.

He used bright light to blind his enemies for a few seconds, while using his shadow formed from the light behind him to teleport onto it.

With one last breath, he looked at the remaining 22 members and got ready.

Multiple attacks came flying toward him at once, all of which Alex had to dodge.

He could likely just stand in front of most of these attacks and not get a single scratch, but some of these bandits were too strong to underestimate them like that.

A woman with a fast movement technique flew right next to him and delivered a strong fist to his head.

With his spiritual sense, Alex had already seen it coming. As soon as she got close, Alex sent out Heaven's impact, making the woman immediately lose consciousness.

As she started falling, he struck her with her sword. The sword carved her body like a hot knife on butter. It slid through her body with no resistance at all, and her two halves fell to the ground down below.

Alex made a quick slash with his sword to get rid of the blood, but there was no need, to begin with. The sword repelled blood off of it like oil repelled water.

Suddenly he ducked as a slash flew over him. 2 men came dashing towards him, with a few more not far behind him.

The 2 men that arrived next to him each had a cultivation base that was too great for his own cultivation. So, he had to rely on his body.

Alex wanted to send out slashes, but he couldn't, for the love of God, put his Qi into the sword at all.

It was not like the Ebony sword, which actively refused to take in his Qi because of the primitive artifact spirit in there. It was more akin to his steel sword not accepting Qi as quickly because they weren't bonded yet.

Only, this sword didn't take Qi slowly. It didn't take Qi at all. So, all of Alex's skills that had him sending out slashes or pouring Qi into the sword were useless to him.

Still, this sword was way too good to replace with at the moment. Just its ability to cut things with such ease was reason enough.

Suddenly, fire erupted from around his fist. Alex couldn't send Qi into the sword, but he surely could use it around the sword.

Alex used the Flame Scripture technique to quickly turn the fire into the shape of a sword, consuming the real sword in it.

Fire flared around him with each swing. The two men that were right upon him tried to use their techniques on him, but they just didn't have enough strength to harm him at all.

After all, his physical strength was close to True Lord 1st realm, and there were only 3 people here that were higher than that.

One of the sword slashes sent fire into one of the man's eyes, blinding him momentarily. Alex took the opportunity to hit the other man who was driving his sword at him.

Alex was right about to cut the man's hands when his focus wavered and his sword hit empty air.

The man's sword hit him and sent him flying downwards.

Alex caught himself midair and shook himself awake. 'What was that drowsiness just now,' he thought and sent his spiritual sense to search for the source.

That was when he noticed the man holding a square lantern with a flickering light inside of it.

Whenever that light flickered towards Alex, he felt a wave of sleepiness hit him as if he hadn't slept for days.

'Dammit! Is that an artifact that induces drowsiness?' he thought.

Alex's body could cure a lot of things, but it never prevented most things at all. That was one thing he hated about his body.

Be it poison, toxins, or mental attacks. Alex's body always dealt with it after the fact, instead of before. He really wished it were otherwise, but it wasn't.

So, he had to deal with it.

He let the sword hover by his side for a split second as he sent a palm-shaped yellow light flying towards the man with the lantern.

While the man panicked, Alex took his sword and got back to fighting.

He had to deal with the man at some time, but right now, there were at least 5 people in between them. He needed to take care of them first.

Friction disappeared around Alex and he burst into speed as if he pushed on something solid even while in mid-air.

The man who hit him hadn't expected such a quick burst of speed and tried to bring back his sword, but Alex appeared right next to him.

He slashed toward the man who was trying to put up his sword to block, but Alex's sword cut it and the man together.

The fire appeared behind Alex in no particular shape and flew towards 4 of the different incoming men, while Alex himself went for the man whose eyes he had burned previously.

The man put his all into his next attack to try and hurt Alex, but Alex suffered it all and still slashed at him.

He felt the man get cut behind those colorful techniques, as his sword cut through it all. His lifeless body fell to the ground in 2 separate halves.

In just less than a minute, Alex had killed 11 of the 30 bandits, leaving them with nothing but shame.

The bandit leader hadn't taken part in the fight because it was only a single enemy, but it seemed waiting would only get more of his men killed.

So, he took out his spear and got ready to attack as well.

Alex huffed and looked at them. This was hard. Fighting a group of people in similar strength to his own, with only one hand that was occupied with a sword that wouldn't take in Qi at all.

The sword was great, but if he wanted to win, he needed to use his Qi no matter what.

So, he put away his sword as golden light filled the emptiness in his hand that soon turned into claws.

"Let's see how good this is in a fight."

Chapter 608: Hurt Meridians

19 bandits remained. Of them, 3 had a cultivation base higher than that of Alex's body cultivation.

True Lord 7th, True lord 4th, and True lord 2nd realm.

Alex stared at the man with True Lord 7th realm, a small with a big build, wearing an earthen colored robe.

Alex was certain that was the leader of the bandits, he had to be. Unless they were okay with someone else weaker than him being the leader, then this man was definitely it.

And he was staring back at Alex.

'I either need to get rid of the 16 others and fight the 3 with more freedom, or kill the 3 as soon as I can and fight the other with more freedom,' he thought.

Alex was sure. As long as the 3 of them weren't present, and no one had a hidden treasure that could deal damage equal to or above that of True Lord 1st realm, he was fine.

He couldn't take that risk at all. He had to think of every person having some sort of special attack that could deal with him.

"So it's the 16 that die first then," he said softly.

The leader spun his silver spear in the air as he sent a worm-shaped tempest flying towards him.

Alex had no way of fighting that. So, he instead burned another bright sun behind him, a fusion of fire and yang, mixed together to produce light enough to illuminate the world like a real sun.

Then, once the shadow was in the right place on the Leader's robes, he vanished.

Multiple sounds of clangs as well as buzzing sounds appeared in the blink of an eye.

Alex's hands blitzed through the air as he tried to rip out the throat and organs of everyone he came across.

He had targeted the leader, but that was just a test. The leader had indeed some sort of defensive treasure to protect himself.

So, using the lingering light, he teleported to the other weaker people and had attacked them. Most of them had defensive treasure which clanged with each attack, but they were way too weak to stop Alex's golden claw which was a mimic of the White Tiger's Golden claw.

At the same time, he sent out other attacks too. He sent palm of the sun, and Iron Fist punch towards the weaker opponents. They wouldn't die to these attacks, but certainly take so much damage that they wouldn't be able to recover in just a few minutes of time unless they also had equally good pills.

However, the thing that concerned him was the buzzing sounds. He had sent multiple Heaven's Impact towards the enemies, but only a few of them were dropping to the ground.

Most of the others had buzzing sounds coming from their artifacts that seemed to be made to stop mental attacks.

The artifacts weren't strong enough to stop them completely, but just enough so that they only felt slight mental pain, instead of straight-up fainting.

It would have been so much easier if they all fell to Heaven's Impact.

Alex's hand went through the glass and then through the man's chest, ripping out his heart back through the broken glasses.

Wisps of light flew into the air as the lantern artifact that was making him dizzy broke into a dozen pieces as it fell along with the man.

Alex felt horrible holding onto a person's heart, but he was getting used to it. He tossed the heart away and flew backward, breathing heavily.

'Dammit! Have my meridians not fully opened yet?' he thought. He was feeling general numbness all over his body. He couldn't tell if it was because his meridians were still to heal completely, or his body was just not back to its full potential due to the missing muscles.

Or maybe it was because he used too many spells in succession, killing 6 more men, injuring 3, and fainting 3 more.

With 12 of the 19 out of battle, only 7 remained. Alex huffed, but this wasn't the time.

He flew back like a serpent of blue flashed next to him with golden fangs. At the same time, a flaming bird flew towards him with its wings outstretched.

Alex enlarged his golden claws and crushed the firebird, turning it into motes of fire Qi, which he quickly controlled to send flying at the serpent of blue that was surrounding him.

The fire Qi and Water Qi destroyed themselves, while the metal Qi floated with no control.

Alex control the metal Qi to form into a sword of bright golden color and threw it back towards one of the men who attacked him.

Just then something black flashed next to him that Alex only caught using his Spiritual sense. If not for that, he would've completely missed it.

A spear attack flashed towards the right side of Alex, completely cutting off his escape. So, grabbed the black thing and tried to crush it.

Just as he crushed it, it burst out into a bunch of vines and roots that wrapped around him. At the same time, the woman with the 2nd True lord realm cultivation base drew an arrow, getting ready to attack.

"Shit!" Alex thought and tried to strain himself out of the entrapment. The vines came loose, but not fast enough.

A massive explosion hit Alex heat first as he was sent tumbling backward.

"Nice!" the girl said as she thought that she killed Alex.

Suddenly, the night turned into day once again and when it turned back to night, the girl's head was off of her neck.

Alex huffed, his right hand holding his sword once again as that was the only thing that could likely cut someone like her.

His forehead was bloody, but he would survive. The blood trickled down to his blade, and he almost hoped it would be refined.

However, he hadn't reached that part yet. He wasn't even able to send Qi into it, let alone be able to refine.

It would take some time.

Alex felt a bit of pain from the charred flesh on his chest, but it was nothing compared to what he felt every day cultivating with Pearl.

He gritted his teeth, which instead looked like a bloody smile as he got back to fighting.

It hurt. His face, his chest, even his right arm. But nothing hurt as much as his meridians.

He had not once, not twice, but three times forced so much Qi out of him at once to create the small sun. Not only were his meridians in constant pain, even his naval area felt a little strained.

As a person with medical knowledge, he knew that if he went any further, that would be extremely bad.

A man sent out a formation plate, which quickly deployed into some sort of formation with a barrier. Alex didn't realize what the formation did at first, but soon, he got it.

It was a vision-impairing formation. Inside the formation, only he was likely trapped in the shroud of darkness unable to see what was outside.

He could fly out, but there was a one-way barrier there. Fortunately, these bandits didn't know about Spiritual sense.

Alex sent him out to the fullest as he sensed 3 spear-shaped green lights flash towards him.

At the same time, a talisman flew towards him from the side. If he knew to do anything, it would be to get as far away from that talisman.

He suddenly stopped flying, and his body fell through the sky. The spear turned mid-flight and turned towards him.

Alex had his blade shine a little as a layer of white light appeared around it. He used the Sword Intent to add power to his slashes as he barely destroyed the 3 green spears.

At the same time, he pulled his hands back and threw his sword upwards to the talisman that was diving toward him.

As soon as the sword struck it, the talisman exploded into so much light that even Alex could see it through the black shroud.

He landed on the ground, did a roll, and grabbed the sword that came flying down like a bullet let go from a barrel.

He changed the sword's trajectory a bit, and the sword slammed onto the ground, hitting the formation plate perfectly, cutting it in half.

The barrier and the black shroud disappeared, and he could see the stunned looks of the bandits.

It was fortunate that they didn't know how to fight together, or he would've likely gotten attacked way more than just that right now.

Alex looked at them from the ground and sighed. He was going to have to hurt his meridians once more, wasn't he?

A ball of fire appeared behind him, enhanced by yang Qi to look like a small sun.

The 6 of them immediately got into defensive stances, even going so far as to bring out their treasures to protect themselves.

They looked at Alex get his sword ready, then... he vanished.

Instantly, the 6 of them used their defensive techniques and waited for the attacks to land. However, no attacks did come their way.

Instead, the light only got dimmer but didn't go out. When they looked below to see what had happened, their eyes went wide.

Their comrades, the ones that were fainted or just wounded were now burning with the same fire as the sun.

However, there was no sign of Alex at all.

"Brother, where did he—"

The man who put down the formation had his words cut short as his head rolled from his body.

Even then, the 5 of them had no idea where Alex had disappeared to.

Chapter 609: Mists

"AH!" another girl shouted, as her arm was cut at the elbows. But the glowing orange shield protected her chest.

At the same time, another man felt a clang on his barrier that threatened to shatter even when he didn't see anyone attack it.

The leader and the rest immediately sent out their Qi sense and sensed something... someone moving without being seen.

"He's invisible!" the leader shouted. Immediately, everyone started using Qi sense.

Qi sense would help them see or feel. It only gave them a vague shape of what existed wherever their Qi went through, but that was enough to catch Alex trying to attack them.

The 5 of remaining ones realized that fighting alone was not the way here. The opponent was way too tricky with his skills, so they needed to fight together, at once.

Alex huffed far away. The burning feeling in his meridians hurt him way more than he wanted to admit. Using the sun technique 3 times was already bad enough, but 4 times nearly destroyed his meridians.

If he were to do it one more time, it was very much likely that he would lose his meridians.

He had already taken a healing pill, and while his burnt skin and cut flesh had healed, the meridians remained mostly untouched.

That meant the burning feeling didn't come from his meridians being damaged, but something else.

'Did my yang and fire Qi burn through them? Can't be, they're not damaged,' he thought.

He continued keeping his attention on the 5 people flying through the air as he sensed their Qi moving towards him to sense him.

This far away, they shouldn't have been able to sense him at all, however, with nothing else in the direction, the slightest hint of something in the air would certainly make Alex be noticed to them.

'What the hell do I do?' Alex thought. 'I'm already struggling with my meridians to pump out Qi to keep flying and staying invisible. If I try to use any other skill, I will die.'

He wanted to fly far away, but the caravan was ahead in the distance. If he did, the bandits would certainly go attack them as revenge.

So, he let the Qi pass through him.

The 4 bandits and their leader rushed towards Alex with all of their skills flaring at full power.

Alex stood in the air with no other choice but to fight. He gripped his sword and looked at the figures ahead of him.

2 of them were stronger than his body cultivation by more than 2 realms, 3 of them stronger than his Qi cultivation by more than a minor realm.

Any of their attacks would hurt him. If hit properly, all of them could kill.

Still, Alex couldn't back down. He breathed deeper and deeper until his sword started glowing white, the only thing he could do. And then...

~SILENCE~

Weapons clattered down below on the ground a few seconds later.

Alex's fist that was strongly gripping his sword loosened a bit as pure terror appeared on his face.

Mists. That was all Alex could see in front of him. Red and bloody mist.

There were 5 people on their way towards him just moments ago, and now... not a single one of them remained.

"You nearly killed yourself," a voice drifted to his ear as someone appeared from the air, making himself visible.

Shen Jing reappeared.

Alex's face changed. He gritted his teeth and gripped his sword again, even harder this time.

Shen Jing chuckled a little as he waved his hands, clearing the bloody mist in front of him.

"YOU!" Alex said, with hatred in his voice. What was he up to? He had just brought Alex here to die, and yet... was he the one who just saved Alex?

As if to clear up Alex's doubts, Shen Jing said, "You're not bad when it comes to fighting. I thought I would have to save you long ago."

Shen Jing looked below at the burning flesh of the bandits.

"You said you lost your arms to bandits in your hometown. Were they much stronger than these men?" he asked.

Alex wasn't sure what was happening right now. So he was helping him?

"They weren't stronger. Only I was very much weaker," Alex said with a cold voice.

"I see," Shen Jing said. Suddenly, a wave of Qi surrounded Alex, gripping him like a fist.

"Stop flying. Stop concealing. In fact, stop doing anything that has to do with Qi," Shen Jing said.

Alex tried to struggle free, but the Qi grasp was way too strong.

"Stop struggling. You will only make this worse," Shen Jing said.

"Why are you doing this? What's your purpose?" Alex asked. "Were you with the bandits?"

"Pfft! Hahaha," Shen Jing suddenly started laughing as if he had never heard of a more funny joke before. "Why would you possibly think I was with the bandits?"

"Because you brought me here for them to kill me," Alex said.

"No. I brought YOU here to kill THEM. I was testing you, a little," Shen Jing said.

"This... this is 'a little'?" Alex asked, pointing to the burning bodies to the side.

"I was planning it to be. I was expecting you to kill 2 or 3 people, maybe even 5 before you needed my saving. However, while I noticed your particularly dense Qi, I somehow didn't notice your body."

"Had I known, I might have removed the 2 stronger ones and let you fight the rest of the 28. But then, you might have easily killed them too," Shen Jing said with his hands on his chin.

"You know what? Now that I think about it, these bandits at the edge of the empire are probably not that good of a test. They didn't have weapons or items that a normal cultivator in the more established sections of the empire would have," he said.

"Either way, you did well. You should rest after we return," Shen Jing said and suddenly dragged Alex behind him.

The speed was so fast that everything looked like a blur to him. 'Yes, that's the speed of a Saint Realm alright,' Alex thought.

He couldn't help but wonder what the hell a saint realm was doing in this remote place.

"Argh!" Alex grumbled softly, but Shen Jing still caught it.

"Don't try to use Qi. The only Qi you should be using now is during cultivation. Any other will hurt you for a while," Shen Jing said.

"Dammit, what's happening to me? Am I hurt? Is this Qi deviation" Alex asked.

"Haha, nothing like that. You did go overboard a little with that little sun stunt, but nothing enough to harm your cultivation," Shun Jing said.

"What did I do?" Alex asked.

"Basically, you made too much Qi flow through your meridians at once. Too much flow caused your meridians to stretch to a point that was way beyond what it could normally handle."

"A normal person would've likely reached your current condition on the first time, maybe second time if they are lucky," Shen Jing said.

"To have created that sun for 5 times in a row, while using so many skills in between. You, little brother, are truly amazing."

Chapter 610: Not What We Want

Alex sat in the rattling carriage that slowly moved towards its destination, Silverleaf city.

Pearl was still to the side, making quite the friendship with the little girl named Xue.

He sat cross-legged on his seat, sending all of his focus onto his meridians. They... they were almost twice as wide as what his meridians would normally be.

Considering it was smaller than normal already due to it not properly healing, this was actually quite massive.

"Will it really heal?" Alex asked.

"Yes, yes, you don't have to worry. Everyone had to go through it once in a while to understand the pain of overinflated meridians. Only then do they realize that it's something bad that one shouldn't do" Shen Jing said.

By now, Alex had come to accept the fact that Shen Jing wasn't really a bad guy. The way he had killed the 5 men without Alex feeling a trace of his power... Shen Jing had no need for these petty tricks.

'Unless he likes tricks,' Alex thought but didn't say it out loud.

"It's like a little curious cubs touching Yin-fire for the first time. Once they do, they will know not to do it again," Shen Jing said looking outside the carriage.

"Yin-fire? What's that?" Alex asked. His curiosity was piqued.

"A type of fire," Shen Jing said. "But you don't have to worry about that for now."

Alex wanted to learn more, but he didn't dare ask and simply nodded. "How long do you think it will take me to heal the meridians?" he asked.

"Hmm... hard to say really," Shen Jing said. "Everyone is different. That is especially true for you. Given your body cultivation... I will give about a month of time before they can return to normal."

"Another month?" Alex exclaimed. He had already spent nearly 3 weeks trying to heal it back to normal, and yet, the time increased by another 4 weeks once again.

4 weeks of continuous cultivation.

"It would take a month... if that is what we wanted to do," Shen Jing said.

"Huh?" Alex got confused. "What do you mean by that? Should I not heal my meridians?"

"No," Shen Jing said. "You should keep them as it is."

"I don't understand," Alex said.

Shen Jing suddenly lost his casual stance and leaned forward towards Alex.

"Your Meridians are different from everyone else. When people body-cultivate, most of the time, they only manage to improve 3 things. Skin, muscles, and bones."

"Only rarely do people improve their organs. Improving Meridians? You would be luckier finding a Phoenix that can't regenerate."

"So, you are in a unique position where your Meridians are very strong. Strong enough to handle your recklessness multiple times."

"If you keep up the recklessness, they will certainly be destroyed. However, if you were to do it in a controlled environment. That is, widening your meridian from time to time. Slowly, but surely, they will start healing themselves to that size."

"Then, you will have meridians so widely open that you can pump out a lot of Qi in a very little time. I don't know if that is useful to an Alchemist or not, but to a cultivator, one couldn't ask for something better," Shen Jing said.

Alex's eyes went wide as he understood the implication. If he could do what he did yesterday, and create suns like that without breaking a sweat, he could use stronger attacks that require more wind-up time very easily.

The amount of time it took to pour his Qi into swords, or formations would halve. Creating fire entities would be very quick as well.

There were a lot of benefits and Alex couldn't even think about them yet.

"That sounds amazing," he said. "When do I start?"

"Let's wait until it stops hurting as much. 2 days should be fine. Cultivate until then," Shen Jing said.

Alex nodded and cultivated. Time passed slowly, and Alex cultivated both the Five Yang Divine Path and the Winter Moon technique interchangeably.

Whenever his body started to heat up a bit, he would change to the Yin technique to cool it down. The Yin also felt cool on his meridians and gave a comforting feeling.

During this time, Shen Jing went out twice for a few hours before returning. Who knew where he went during this time.

On the second time, Alex decided to ask.

"Where do you go for hours?" he asked.

"I'm searching for places," he said.

"Places? Are you out here searching for something?" he asked. He thought he was finally seeing why Shen Jing was in this remote corner of the continent at all.

By now, his theory about him being a player had already disappeared. There was no way someone could reach the saint realm and have this much knowledge on cultivation as a player.

"No, I'm not looking for something out here. You can stop trying to guess who I am and what I am doing here. The world is way too vast and you haven't even seen the smallest of them to figure out who I am," Shen Jing said.

That shut up Alex. So, he went back to cultivating.

On the second day, Shen Jing brought Alex far away from the caravan to do his Sun trick again.

Alex prepared himself and instantly drew out a massive amount of Qi from his body that passed through the meridians, making them look like they were bulging at the seams.

The sun formed in front of Alex, the dazzling red and orange it that shined just like the sun above him.

It was about a meter in diameter and was fully constructed with Qi.

Any more heat and he would likely die from burning himself. Alex felt a bit of fear, wondering if he would injure himself using this sun.

The sun itself wasn't as dangerous as Alex. Since it was produced from his own cultivation base, the damage it could deal was the same as his cultivation base too.

However, for some reason, its aura gave off an aura that made it look more dangerous than it was.

From what Alex could see even Shen Jing was having a hard time keeping his chilled personality in front of the sun.

He breathed in and out heavily, more so than Alex. 'Is he...scared?' Alex wondered.

Shen Jing wasn't scared. In fact, he was the exact opposite. He was excited.

The sun in front of him gave him a sense of excitement and nervousness, something he had actually felt not so long ago.

Actually, that event was much more exciting... or rather fearsome than this small sun. That event he went through a few months ago, now that was something else.

But still, seeing the sun gave him a sense of need to bow down in front of it, which he resisted.

"It truly is incredible what you can do," he said. "Although, stop it or you will hurt your meridians."

Alex nodded and quickly stopped the sun. The sun lasted for a few more seconds without his constant Qi input and disappeared.

"If you were to give that a percentage, how much Qi would you say you have used to make this sun?" Shen Jing asked.

Alex felt his own Qi reserve and gave a rough estimate of 10%.

"10%? That's so much better than what I would've expected of you. And here I thought I was already overestimating you with 15%."

"So if the fight lasted longer and your meridian were fine, you could've kept going, right?" Shen Jing asked.

"Yes, I still had enough to fight," Alex said.

"Great! Absolutely great. Hahaha, I'm so glad I found you," Shen Jing said.

"How did you find me?" Alex asked. "I'm still curious. What about me attracted you towards me?"

Shen Jing smiled and shook his fingers. "You are not going to be able to make me answer like that. Why I decided to help you, you will find soon enough, hopefully."

Alex shook his head. They always said that. Get stronger, and I will tell you, or it's not time for you to learn about it yet.

Couldn't they just give him the information straight on? What was the reason behind all of this secrecy?

"Are you not hurt? Your meridians should be feeling like they will burst at any moment now," Shen Jing asked.

"It does, but I've learned to live with the pain," Alex said and walked back to the carriage, ignoring the curious look of Shen Jing.

Once he reached the carriage, Alex started cultivating once more, using the two different methods alternatively.

Shen Jing looked at this point with a bit of surprise too. He wanted to ask what Alex was doing, but he believed he had a very good idea of what was happening.

'Well, since he already has a solution, he probably doesn't need mine,' Shen Jing thought and decided to keep quiet.

Alex cultivated for an entire day and only opened his eyes when he felt the carriage stop.

"What's going on?" he asked, opening his eyes for the first time in hours.

Shen Jing opened the door and jumped out.

"Come on out, we are here," he said.

"Here?" Alex asked for a second before realizing what he meant. "Oh, we already arrived in Silverleaf city, huh?"

He got out as well and looked at the city. Surprisingly, the city had no defensive walls like all the cities of the Crimson Empire had. Or even the Riverweed city from not long ago.

"How much further is your destination again?" Shen Jing asked as if to remind him.

Alex couldn't help but chuckle when he remembered that he was barely 3% of the way done with his journey.