

## Alchemy 671

### Chapter 671: Radiant City

"No... can it be? Really?" Alex was too stunned to think clearly. His mind showed him the same image over and over as he remembered the face.

That was the same.

She wore something different from the farm clothes he saw her in. Now she wore magenta robes with light blue linings on the side.

She was thinner, much thinner now, but Alex could easily reason that to be something that came from her cultivating.

Despite all that, despite all the changes she had gone through, Alex felt very certain.

That was his mother.

That only brought on more confusion. 'How? How is she here? Why is she here? Is she okay? Am I going mad?' Alex couldn't think of anything else.

"Fellow Daoist, is anything wrong?" one of the staff members came up to him when they saw him standing still inside the formation circle.

Alex jolted out of his daze and looked at the staff member.

"That group right now, what city did they teleport to?" he asked.

"The one just now? It should be the same place you came from. We only swap with a single city every time," the staff said.

"Same city? So they went to the Lightborn city?" Alex asked.

"Yes," the staff said.

"I need to go there right now. Can you teleport me there?" Alex asked.

"I'm afraid not, fellow Daoist," he said.

"I will pay for it. I will pay the price of 50 if I have to. Fellow Daoist, please, I really need to go back right now," Alex said.

The man seemed to notice Alex's troubles and shook his head. "I'm afraid that's not possible, Fellow Daoist. The formation can't work for another hour and needs to recharge before the next transfer."

"Besides, even if it was ready, we cannot teleport you anywhere without the other formation activating at the same time, and it only happens once a day for each location," the staff member said.

Alex knew that, but he still couldn't help but hope the information was wrong.

'Should I just do it?' he thought to himself. He had many tests to do with his own Qi, but one thing he knew for certain was that he could activate runes that others couldn't.

Since he had noticed similar situations for formations over the last few years, he had reasons to believe that his Qi did the same thing for formations too.

There were still many caveats to this theory of his, but he really wanted to test them out right now.

In the end, he calmed down and thought logically. 'I can't do something so radical out of nowhere,' he thought to himself and walked out of the teleportation formation.

As he did, he started thinking of how he could go back to the Lightborn city as fast as he could.

That wasn't only it. Lightborn city could be just another stop in their journey. He didn't know where his mother was actually going or who she was with.

"Can I register for tomorrow's teleportation?" Alex asked the staff member.

"To Lightborn city?" the staff thought to himself. "I don't think you can go there for another 3 days, Fellow Daoist."

"You see, due to the talisman competition, the number of people coming to the capital was quite high. So, the formations are already booked for the next 3 days," the staff member said.

"If not for normal travel taking less than 3 days for most people, I'm sure the list of people leaving using formations would have lasted for days."

Alex sighed when he heard that. The staff member wasn't lying or anything, but he still couldn't help but find the answer unpleasing.

Just as he was about to leave, the scene of him seeing his mother played in his mind once again.

Only this time, he didn't focus on her but on the other things he had missed.

There were nearly 50 people standing there. Most were random men and women who just happened to be here at the same time as his mother.

However, he could see a few figures that wore Magenta robes with a light blue lining on their robes.

'That's definitely a group of some sort, right?' Alex thought. If he found what organization that robe was from, he would certainly find where his mother was.

"Brother, do you know what organization be it clan or set wears Magenta robes with light-blue linings like the ones that just left?" Alex asked.

"Uhh... I'm afraid I'm not knowledgeable about organizations and their uniforms, fellow Daoist," the staff said.

"I see, thank you anyway," Alex said and turned to leave.

"It's my pleasure to help a customer," the staff said. Just as Alex was about to leave, the staff remembered something and said, "I don't know if it is any help, but I'm pretty sure that most of the people who left just now were here to watch the Talisman competition."

Alex thought for a second. Many people would come to watch such a competition, so that wasn't really any help. But still, he had someplace to start from.

"I see, thank you," he said and left the place.

Alex walked out of the building into a majestic city full of a million colors all around him. It was 3 pm in the afternoon, but the city looked like it radiated as brightly as other cities would in the nighttime.

The atmosphere was like a festival with people moving from left and right with no regard to anyone else causing a crowd so big that Alex was stunned that this many people could even live in a single city.

But then again, this was the capital. If many people didn't live here, who would?

Alex sighed. He couldn't enjoy these sights at all, not with his mother's situation being on his mind all the time.

'Where do I start from?' he wondered. 'I need to find someone from the competition. If there was someone amongst them that gathered information about the guests, then I will have a much higher... chance...'

Alex's words trailed off as an idea grew in his head.

"Wait, this is a competition set by the guilds, right? Doesn't that mean they are the ones who would be responsible for the guests?" Alex thought.

A glimmer of hope rose from his heart as he immediately went into the crowd to make his way towards the guilds.

After half an hour of searching and asking for directions, Alex finally made his way to the location in the capital where the 7 guilds were located in.

Unlike the other cities, the capital held all 7 of the guilds.

The very first thing that surprised him in the location, even more so than the number of customers was the amount of space each guild took.

The guilds in the capital were at least 5 times as large as any other guilds he had seen in any of the cities.

Following that, there were nearly 10 times more receptions as well. Alex could only begin to imagine just how many experts each of these guilds held.

Without hesitation, Alex entered the Talisman guild. While he wanted to go check the Alchemy guild, the Talisman guild was more important to him at the moment.

Alex found the shortest of the queues for the receptions and stood there. After about 20 minutes of waiting his turn finally came.

"Excuse me, I have an unusual problem that I hope you would help indulge me in for a few minutes," Alex said.

The receptionist in front of him looked confused. "How can I help you?" he asked.

"I need to find the identity of someone who may or may not has been at the competition grounds. You guys keep track of all the audience, right?" Alex asked.

"Uhh... if they entered the competition ground, yes," the receptionist said. "We can't tell if they didn't enter the competition ground and instead watched from outside."

"Outside?" Alex looked confused. "You had screenings set up outside the competition grounds too?"

"Yes, that's how a majority of the people watched the competitions," the staff said.

'Shit,' Alex thought. 'I don't even know if mother was here to watch the competition or not. This may just have been a complete coincidence as far as I know.'

'Shit, to begin with, I am not even absolutely sure if that is my mother, or maybe someone that just happens to look like her,' Alex thought and even started to doubt himself.

He quickly shook his head. 'No, there's no way I can't recognize my own mother. That was definitely her,' he thought.

"I don't know if they were inside the competition grounds or not. Is there anything else you can do to help me? I can tell you what their robes looked like," Alex said.

"Um," the receptionists thought for a moment and said, "Ah, there are recordings of the matches from the competition currently being sold right here. Would you like to buy them to see if the group entered?"

"I cannot guarantee if everyone was recorded or not, but you may get lucky and see them in the crowd," the receptionist said.

Alex felt the knot that was growing in his stomach softening a little. "Do you have such a thing? Please, I would like to buy one," Alex said.

"Yes," the receptionist brought out a small stack of talismans containing about 20 individual talismans.

"All of this?" Alex asked.

"Yes, it's over the course of multiple days and consists of multiple perspectives over the stage," the receptionist said.

Alex sighed. He needed them all it seemed. "How much for all of these?" he asked.

"300 True spirit stones."

Chapter 672: Hei Lin

"Thank you for your patronage," the receptionist said with a bright smile as he took the 300 True Spirit stones from Alex's hand.

Alex wanted to punch the man's face when he saw that goddamn smile.

'Such a fucking rip-off,' he thought to himself. 300 True spirit stones could buy a person a high-grade pill made by the best of the best True rank alchemists. That was including the cost of the ingredients.

And here, he was being sold the recordings of a competition that took place for only 4 separate days for 300 True spirit stones.

This wasn't even an exclusive talisman or something. It was a mass-produced talisman that was likely copied from the original with little regard to the quality of the copy.

The worst offense of these talismans in Alex's eyes was the fact that they were single-use talismans. He wouldn't even be able to sell them after looking through them once.

'Fuck,' he cursed once more and sat on a bench in the corner of the hall to view the talismans.

The talismans were ordered according to the date of the recording. So, he took the talisman for the first day and looked into it.

The moment his spiritual sense touched the talisman, it was like he had opened a floodgate of information as visions of someone else entered his mind.

He suddenly felt like he was standing in the midst of a crowd, seeing different things, but focusing on a single one.

He tried to move his eyes, but he couldn't. He was forced to see what the recorder of this talisman was watching.

'Wow,' Alex couldn't help but say. If he had known the recording would be this amazing, he likely wouldn't have cursed that poor receptionist earlier.

He immediately put all thoughts aside and started searching for his mother, or someone that was wearing a similar robe as her.

When Alex started focusing on the crowd, he was truly surprised by their sheer size. 'So many people,' he thought. The arena the recorder was staying at was larger than the coliseum from the Crimson Empire.

That was not all, the number of people was also clearly larger. And each one of them was a high-ranking cultivator.

Alex tried to keep down his shock while he searched for his mother, but it felt impossible.

The man had recorded not much from before the competition started, and once it started, he would only focus on the cultivation.

"This isn't it," Alex thought and stopped watching.



When he did so, Alex felt his vision cut off and he was staring blankly back into the real world. 'Damn, if I was anywhere else, this would've been dangerous. I shouldn't view such talismans out in the open from now on,' he thought to himself.

Since it was the guild, there would be security, so he was free to watch the talismans as much as he wanted to.

Alex was about to view the second perspective when he noticed something. The talisman in front of him was empty, as expected of a one-time use talisman.

However, the information was still in his brain. He could sense a small pocket of energy floating in his spiritual sea that he could tap into to view the information back again.

'That's pretty nifty,' he thought and moved on to the second talisman.

As soon as Alex started watching, his vision drifted to another side of the arena. While not on the complete opposite side from the first perspective, it still gave a different group of people for Alex to search from.

He was sure that there was a group of people close to him that were in his blind spot and would never notice these visions. All he could do was hope that his mother wasn't amongst the group.

Soon, he started searching for the same group again but alas he wasn't able to find her.

He sighed, but he had one last hope still in him.

Alex hadn't seen anyone young from his mother's group when they had teleported, so he had little hope, but he still held some.

'I hope her group was one of the participating groups and thus she is in a special seat somewhere and watching this all privately,' he thought.

After all, if he thought about it logically, there was no way that someone who could use the teleportation formation so early from the capital couldn't even enter the arena in the first place.

So, this time when the competition on the first day started, he didn't stop and watched the starting ceremony.

The contestants were called one after another as their information appeared in a small panel on top of them.

Alex recognized a few of the family names of the competitors that appeared on stage.

Shen, Jin, Zhou, Fu, Lu, Han, Song, and even the royal family, Wei had participants in there.

Aside from them, Alex noticed the robes of a few other disciples as belonging to the elite sects too.

A man of big stature walked onto the stage after them. He looked quite bigger than last time, horizontally that was.

The fatty Tian Ye appeared on the stage and suddenly everyone cheered.

'He won this competition, didn't he?' Alex thought. That had already been spoiled to him. He could see that he was a definite crowd favorite for sure.

Alex looked at his name on the flying screen on top of the stage.

Tian Ye - 38 years old - True King 2nd Realm - Demon Whisper sect

'Oh shit, that fatty already entered the True king's realm?' Alex felt slightly shocked.

Last he remembered, this man was in the True Lord 5th realm. In just 3 years he managed to break through 7 times to reach his current realm.

'Given how much time he must have spent on talismans, he must have worked hard to reach this realm,' Alex thought. Still, he wasn't sure if this was fast or not, but from how people reacted to hearing True King realm, he was sure this was at least better than average.

As he looked at the floating screen, the information changed to something else.

Hei Lin - 49 years old - True Lord 3rd realm - Flowing Brush sect

'49 years old? They allow such old people to take part?' Alex looked at the information with a bit of shock.

All the ones that had come before this person were at least younger than 40 years old, so Alex had assumed the age requirement to be less than 40 years old.

However, it turned out that he was wrong. 'Is this person allowed because of how weak thei—'

Alex's words stopped in his heart as he saw the person walk onto the stage.

She wore a magenta robe with light blue linings. Her gaze looked down on the stage, away from the crowd with clear nervousness visible. None of the crowd cheered for her as they did for Tian Ye, but there was still a round of applause.

Alex saw her look up after gathering enough courage on the stage. Then, he finally saw her face clearly.

This vision was much clearer than the split-second glance he had made back in the teleportation building.

There was not a single doubt in his mind now.

This was absolutely his mother.

It wasn't just the face that gave away, however. There were other hints as well. His mother had been about 43 when he had left home to go to Oakleaf city.

Now, 6 years later, she would be 49 years old. Besides that, her name was an absolute giveaway.

Hei Lin. She had either very thoughtfully named her so, or more likely, she had called herself her real name, Helen, and people here just misheard her.

Without even knowing, tears streamed down Alex's cheeks. He didn't understand how or why his mother was here. At the moment, he didn't care.

All he could care about was that his mother was here and he knew who she was.

A member of the Flowing Brush sect. With this information, Alex could easily find her no matter where the sect was.

He wiped his tears and continued looking at the competition. The competition soon started and the first day's contests were soon concluded.

His mother had done quite well, ranking in the top 10 amongst the nearly 300 participants.

Once the vision ended, Alex brought out the next one and watched it.

The competition reminded him of the Annual competition back in Crimson Empire.

Alex was nearly sure that it was these competitions that inspired those in that empire. After all, the first emperor was someone from the Fu family who would have had knowledge of such things.

The first day was about recognizing ingredients and such.

The second day was about cognitive skills and how fast one could learn something. Alex could guarantee that his mother was one of the best in this.

He had gained his talent in learning everything fast from her after all.

This time, his mother had ranked first easily.

The third day was about speed. Alex was sure his mother would struggle in this, but it seemed he was wrong. She still managed to place in the top 10 towards the lower end of it.

Finally, the last day was about putting everything to the test and creating the best talisman you could make in as little time as possible.

Alex watched that one entire competition in shock as his mother placed second in it.

His shock only deepened when the final results arrived, and his mother placed 2nd in the whole competition, only behind the fatty Tian Ye.

#### Chapter 673: DawnSpring City

After a quick questioning, Alex found the location of the Flowing Brush sect. It lay to the southeast of the capital, just outside of a massive city known as the Dawnspring City.

From the map, Alex could tell that the city was quite close to the eastern mountain ranges, albeit it was still a couple of hundred kilometers away.

Once he got the information, Alex left the guild. He walked out and looked in the direction of the Alchemy Guild. However, once he saw the number of people inside, he decided to skip it.

'I need to go to DawnSpring city as soon as I can,' he thought and started walking away from the area where the guilds were.

He wondered if he could take the teleport formations back, but from what he had heard, it was all packed up for the next 3 days or so.

'It will be faster to just fly there,' he thought.

The distance between Radiant City and Dawnspring city was about 5,000 kilometers.

Which, if he few would take him about 3 days as well. He could stay back and then leave, but there was no guarantee that there would even be an opening after 3 days given how many people he saw in those recordings.

'Alright, that settles it,' he thought and started walking away.

As he did, his eyes fell on a group of people making their way through the road. They wore clothes that changed color based on the direction it was viewed from.

Lightsworns.

Unconsciously, Alex placed his right hand on his stump. He was finally here, in the radiant city.

And he was going to leave already?

How long had it been since he had lost his arm? And he still hadn't gotten it back.

'Do I stay... back?' he thought to himself. He couldn't imagine the help his arm would be if it grew back. He desperately wanted it back as well.

But...

'No, I need to go see mother first,' he thought to himself. 'My arm doesn't matter as much to me right now as my mother's situation.'

Once his heart grew resolute, he left the city.

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The talisman competition had ended just yesterday, and today the prizes had been distributed. Helen was back in her room in the Flowing Brush sect looking at the prizes in her hand.

There were a few talismans in her hand. Some recorded designs to craft certain talismans, while some contained power to block some damage.

Helen didn't really care much for them. At least, not as much as the prize on her other hand.

In her right hand, she held a brush made up of exotic bamboo as the handle, and the manes of the Soaring Lion as the soft bristles.

she stared at the brush for a while before bringing out her talisman-making station from her storage bag.

She poured some ink to the side and dipped the new brush in it.

The brush absorbed just the right amount of ink. Not too little, and not too much.

'As expected of a Saint rank artifact,' she thought to herself as she held the brush and finally placed her palm on the empty talisman paper.

Helen took a deep breath and then started making runes on the piece of paper one by one.

Helen couldn't go too fast or too slow. The slightest deviation from what was symmetrical would make the talisman go from good to unusable in a single instant.

After nearly 10 minutes of slow drawing, she finally managed to create the talisman. Her arms moved as a technique was used upon the talisman.

Within seconds, the slightly wet ink on the paper dried like it had been made years ago.

"Phew!" Helen wiped her sweat and ignored the slightly throbbing head to quickly check the Alignment of the talisman.

After placing the talisman in the square-shaped tester, she learned that she had reached 72% alignment.

"Ah, so close to 75%," she thought. Still, just the fact that she was able to reach such a high alignment was monstrous, to begin with.

'I gained nearly 5% with this brush. It's quite good,' she thought and cleaned the ink from the brush using some sort of concoction.

'Good!' she told herself. 'If I can go on like this, I can become strong enough to leave this land and go look for them.'

Once she cleared everything, she sat on the mat and started to cultivate. However, before she began, she heard a knock on her door.

"Come in," she said and watched a tall, old man walk in. This man had no beard, but his mustache came down in a short thin line to his chin.

His head was bald in a circle and what remaining hair he had was tied in a ponytail.

His magenta robe seemed to shine with some slight color in the night as he slowly walked in through the door.

"Greetings, master," Helen said as the old man walked in.



"Lin'er, were you making talismans?" the old man asked.

"I was simply testing my new brush, master," she said.

"Oh, I see. Make sure to rest up. You've done a lot in the past week," he said.

"Yes, master," Helen said. She expected her master to leave after saying that, but he stuck around for a little longer.

"Is something wrong, master?" she asked.

"Um... there is a small... not really problem, but situation rather, and we need you to stay here for the next month or so. Can you do that?" the old man asked.

Helen's eyes narrowed a little. "What's the situation?" she asked.

"It doesn't matter. It will go away within a few weeks. It's just a side effect of you winning 2nd place in the competition," the old man said.

"I see, then... I guess I can stay here. I want to practice the new talisman I got the designs for today," Helen said.

"Okay, do so. I will let you know when it is safe to leave," the old man said and walked away.

He closed the door behind him and sighed. The problems for the next few days wouldn't be much for him as he wouldn't have to handle them, but he couldn't help but feel bad for the disciples that did have to.

Once he was out of her place, the old man left for his own abode while making sure to remember to leave some information for the disciples tomorrow.

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"Is this the Dawnspring city?" Alex wondered as he finally arrived at the outskirts of a city with tall walls, surrounded by many other smaller city-like patches of buildings.

He stopped before entering the city and looked at the entire area from high above.

There were 3 distinct, separate locations that Alex could see from his viewpoint.

One of them was a large set of buildings not far from where he flew off.

Next, there was another separate group of buildings to a small mountain range to the south of the city.

Finally, similar to the one in the south, there was another set of building in the larger mountain ranges to the north. This place was also far larger than the other one.

"If I'm not wrong, this place on the flat land must be the Han ancestral family home," Alex thought. "Then the larger one in the mountains must be the Heaven's Peak school, and finally, this smaller one must be the Flowing Brush sect. That's where I need to go to."

Alex soon came to the ground and dropped from his boat. It felt quite good not having to sit down all day long.

He entered the city and was immediately greeted with the sight of many cultivators, all wearing different colored robes.

He saw the brown robes of the Han family, the black and red of the disciples of Heaven's Peak school, and finally the magenta of the Flowing Brush sect.

These were the main group of people, but of course, there were many others as well.

Alex ignored them all and without hesitation walked to the other side to find his way out of the city and to the mountains where the Flowing Brush sect.

Surprisingly, he found a lot of people were going there too. Some were on flying treasures, while some took carriages.

Alex on the other hand simply walked on foot. It would take him some time, but he would reach his mother sooner or later.

#### Chapter 674: Excuses

When Alex finally arrived at the gates of the Flowing Brush sect, he couldn't help but be surprised when he was greeted by a crowd that fully occupied the sect gate.

"The hell?" Alex looked in confusion. He looked left and right and saw people from different sects and cities who seemed to have come here.

Alex even noticed a few cultivators from the elite sects and clans in the crowd. However, they looked like they were one of the less important individuals in their given sect.

He had to line up to even get a chance to talk with the guards. So, he waited for his turn to come up as the crowd murmured on its own.

'Why are they here? Is there a celebration of some sort for my mother winning second place?' Alex wondered. If that were true, he could only wonder how much rowdier the Demon Whisper sect was.

After all, the fatty Tian Ye had won the...

Alex's thoughts wandered off as his eyes fell on the same fatty he was thinking about. That fatty too was in the crowd, waiting like everyone else.

"What?" Alex couldn't help but blurt out under his breath. 'Why is he here?'

This crowd was starting to make less sense to him now. 'Is there not a celebration then?'

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, he arrived at the gate with a few young individuals who seemed to be on guard duty.

They sighed when they saw him, which surprised him as he had never seen them before. 'Is dealing with the crowd just that demanding?' he wondered.

"Hello, I'm here to meet someone," Alex said.

"Yeah, yeah. Get on with it," the guard said with clear annoyance in his voice.

Alex was surprised, but he didn't let the rudeness get to him. "I'm here to see my mother. I was hoping you could let her know," he said.

"Oh," the guard's attitude changed at once. "Your mother?"

The guard took out his medal and got ready to communicate back with the sect. "Is she an elder? A helper? What's her name?" the guard asked.

"Um, I don't know her role in the sect, but my mother's name is Hei Lin. She's the one who won second place in the Talisman competition," Alex said.

The guard's hand that was bringing the medal up to his forehead stopped as he looked at Alex with what looked like shock on his face.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"Hei Lin, that's my mother's name," Alex repeated.

The man stared at him with a completely serious face, and then... he burst out laughing.

"Hahaha! Nice one, young man. I nearly fell for it. Hey guys, we have a new excuse amongst the crowd," the guard said, calling to the other ones.

"Oh, what is it?"

"A new one? So soon?"

People gathered around making Alex feel awkward. 'What's going on?' he thought.

"This young brother says he's sister Hei's son," the guard said.

"Son? Haha, that really is a new one. Brother, thanks for the laugh," another guard said.

"Wait, does he want her to adopt him?" one of the confused guards asked.

"No, not adopt. He says he already is the son," the guard reiterated.

"Now that's a comedy," the confused guard finally said.

Alex looked at them all for a few seconds and said, "Um, can you please call my mother first before you laugh yourself unconscious?"

"He's already calling her his mother. Oh, this poor brother must have something hit his head in the last few days," the guards laughed again.

"I really am her son. Can you guys please get serious?" Alex asked.

"Oh yeah? Then everyone that's standing here should be her brothers and husbands, right?" the guards asked. "Go away, little brother. At least come up with a better excuse next time if you want to meet with sister Hei."

Alex was flabbergasted. He had come all this way from the capital to see his mother, and right when he had arrived at the door, he was stopped?

His spiritual perception landed on the 5 guards and saw that their cultivation base was in the higher end of the True Lord realm. They were likely one of the better disciples of the sect.

"Little brother, please leave. We have more meeting requests and marriage requests to deal with. Everyone here wants to meet sister Hei. We need to continue rejecting them all," the guard said.

"Can't you just give her a message and see if she comes out or not? Brother, I really am her son," Alex said.

The guard only shook his head. "Can't do that. We are on strict orders not to disturb sister Hei while she is breaking through," the guard said. "Please leave now."

'Mother is breaking through?' Alex thought for a moment and walked away. 'Was that true, or were they trying to get rid of me?'

"I am from Hiding Sword Palace and have come on behalf of my master. I'm here to visit Maiden Hei Lin. I hope you can call her out please," a man walked up to the guard after Alex moved away.

"Sorry, brother. Sister Hei is currently in closed cultivation, trying to break through. I'm afraid we cannot call her at the moment," the guard said.

"I see, that's a shame," the man said and left.

'Ah, so it really is just a lie,' Alex thought. Still, he couldn't believe so many people had come for his mother just because she won 2nd place in the competition.

'I can't believe they would go so far as to ask her hand in marriage,' Alex thought. 'What would father do if he found out?'

As his thoughts steered in that direction, Alex's heart skipped a beat. He hadn't thought about his father at all.

If his mother was here, then his father must have entered the game as well, even if it was just once.

Was he okay? Was he in the western continent? Or did he end up somewhere else?

Worry grew in Alex's heart as he looked back towards the guard, and then to the crowd. With so many people wanting to see her, Alex became increasingly sure that he wasn't going to meet her today at all.

He could sneak in, but he didn't know what sort of defenses this place had, not to mention the saint realm that could see with a single scan of their senses.

'No, I will have to come back later for sure,' he thought and left the area. People would continue to pour in and the guards would continue to make excuses.

Alex looked at the sky and saw that it had gotten darker. "I should find a place to stay soon," he thought.

"Or I could just stay in the alchemy guild like I did last time."

After thinking for a moment, he decided to not waste money on renting places when he could just stay in the guild.

So, Alex went back to the city, and by evening, he had entered the DawnSpring branch of Alchemy Guild.

Alex took out the bronze badge from his storage and hung it over his chest before going towards the mission board.

It was time to make some pills.

#### Chapter 675: Questions about the Sword

Alex stayed in the alchemy room sometime after finishing the product. Being in a big city, the demand for better pills was everywhere, so Alex was forced to create pills that were in the 35% or higher harmony consistently.

That wasn't hard for him, but that did mean he couldn't cheat his way with the twin pills which could get him to 25% consistently.

After finishing one of the pills, he decided to rest for a bit.

'How long has it been since I've rested?' he thought to himself.

From the 11 days in the demon realm to the 5 days it took him to go to the capital and get to Dawnspring city had wrung him dry.

He wanted to let his body stay still for a moment and finally now was the time.

He did nothing but let his mind wander as he took a deep breath.

His mind wandered from having nothing to do and soon he found himself thinking about his mother and father again.

He couldn't wait to meet her since it had been nearly 3 years for him since he had met her.

When he thought about that, he realized that she hadn't seen him in 6 years. She must've been more desperate to see him.



Alex was just happy that she didn't fall victim to the mental problems some of the players developed after their soul was suppressed.

'I hope they are starting to get back their memories of the time when they were suppressed,' he thought.

Alex fiddled with the ring on his index finger as he remembered that he still had to open it up more.

After reaching about 20 or so cubic meters in volume, the ring was getting harder to open. The Qi he put into the ring would simply disappear with no hints as to why.

So, Alex was forced to stop for now and try once his Qi was stronger. Still, 20 cubic meters was a lot of space for someone who only hoarded ingredients for pills.

He kept most in the storage bags anyway out of fear of people noticing him using the ring too much.

As he thought that, Alex brought out a jar from his storage bag. It was the big jar of spicy medicinal paste that was supposed to do... something he believed.

He wanted to test it on his body but was a little afraid about it. It would be fine if it were poison, but what if it wasn't considered something bad by the body and it still destroyed his body?

Alex kept that particular jar away as he brought out the other small vials of medicinal pastes. He had recipes for the pastes, so if he wanted to, he could make the pastes and simply compare them with the medical pastes in the vial to learn which was which.

Alex spent a few more minutes just absentmindedly going through the items in his ring when he found the talisman with the map again.

Alex looked at the map and showed a confused look. "If the demon realm opens every 10 years, the other one has to do so as well right?" he thought.

If there was another realm that opened up, he would have a way to find it. However, the demons were in hiding at the time, so he wasn't sure if they would leave the door to the demon realm in an open area.

'Wait, did they create the demon realm? Probably not. It must've been a secret realm that they refined,' he thought.

Alex put away the map for now and pulled out the thin sword from his ring. He poured in his Qi, but nothing entered the sword at all.

It wasn't like when he tried to pour Qi into the ring, or the Ebony sword where he felt something else push from the other side.

This one just felt like he was splashing water into a metal wall, and hoping it would cave in. There just didn't seem to be a chance for that to happen.

"How is a sword without a spirit keeping me from putting my Qi into it?" Alex thought to himself. "I wonder if it knows."

Alex immediately went into his mental space and saw the mess that was there. Having not come here in a week or so had caused the silver threads to fly all over the place

Alex flew up to the side of the mountain and grabbed the crystal ball as he moved around the place gathering the threads.

Alex wanted to ask the spirit first, but the spirit spoke up before him. "I sensed your spirit grow a little weaker a few days earlier, what happened?" it asked.

"Weaker?" Alex was surprised. 'Has my spirit grown weaker?'

"Were you attacked? Did you create a puppet? Did you get a beast? What did you d—"

"Ah yes, I bonded with a new beast," Alex said.

"I see. Well, it wasn't bad damage to your spirit. Also, the change wasn't very much so you should be fine," the spirit said.

"You care about my spirit?" Alex asked.

"I care about mine," the spirit said. "Whether I like it or not, I can't seem to leave this place. Since you aren't so easily tempted either, I can't do anything but remain here for eternity."

"The only escape I can find from here is death, and I don't want that. So, until I want that, you will have to remain alive," it said.

"If I die, you die?" Alex asked.

"Yes," the spirit said.

Alex looked at the spirit for a few seconds with narrowed eyes as he got curious.

"The beast I bonded a few days ago, it has a bloodline of someone," Alex asked.

"Why are you telling me this?" the spirit asked with clear confusion in its voice.

"The bloodline belongs to someone called the Undying god," Alex said.

Suddenly, the spirit seemed to change as the black goo around it jumped to life.

"God? Did you say GOD? Where is it? Let me kill it! Let me kill it right now!" it shouted.

Alex watched the spirit go berserk with absolute amazement in his eyes. "I lied," he told the spirit to calm it down.

"You did? Tsk, why would you do that?" it said.

"You sound so earnest and... normal when you are talking about normal things. Now that your arrogance and haughtiness are gone, you feel like a common spirit," Alex said. "However, the moment I bring up a God, your attitude changes entirely. Why is that?"

"It's clear isn't it?" Godslayer said. "I hate gods."

"Can you think of a reason as to why you hate gods beyond the simple 'because they are gods'?" Alex asked.

"That's... do I need another reason?" the spirit asked.

Alex couldn't think of anything to say. it seemed the hate for gods was ingrained into the spirit.

"Right, I almost forgot why I was here," Alex said as he remembered about the sword.

"That thin sword you were trapped in. Does it still hold another spirit? No right?" Alex asked.

"That sword? No," Godslayer said.

"Then can you tell me why I can't use my Qi with it? I can't seem to pour any," Alex said.

"HAHAHAHA!" the spirit suddenly laughed as if it had heard the biggest joke of all time. "You expect to be able to use that sword? Keep dreaming. No one in this world can use that sword aside from its owner."

"Although, I can make it possible, you know. All you have to do it put me back into the sword, and you will be able to pour Qi into it. I can work as a conduit to connect you to the sword," the spirit said.

"Absolutely not. I'm not letting you get out of here. I don't know what atrocities you would do if you got out," Alex said.

"Well, then good luck," the spirit said and flew out of Alex's hands as it went drifting around the mountain.

"Tsk, it didn't tell me anything in the end," Alex thought. However, he still learned that it was simply impossible to use that sword.

He wouldn't stop trying outright just because the spirit told him so, but he would find less inclination to try to do so now that he had learned what he did.

Once he finished collecting the silver threads, he looked back at the mountain with a curious look on his face.

"Is this getting small at all?" he asked himself. It looked like a few of the imperfections here and there were getting smoothed out. Other than that, there was virtually no difference.

Alex sighed and got back out of his spiritual sea. He then looked at the sword in his arm, knowing full well that he would likely never be able to use it to its fullest extent.

He sighed once more and put it back into his ring before walking out of the room. Once he delivered the pills he had created, he walked out of the alchemy guild again and quickly made his way out of the city.

Since it was late in the afternoon, people who visited the Flowing Brush sect would start to leave now.

So, it was a better time for him to go and quickly get to meet the guards. Alex wasn't sure how long they could keep the excuse of his mother breaking through, but it surely couldn't be wrong.

Sooner or later, they would have to be fed up with him and either attack him, which would cause a big enough commotion to get everyone's attention, or the better result, just send his mother a message.

## Chapter 676: Guests

"Brother, you here to see your mother?" one of the guards joked as they saw Alex approaching.

Alex simply smiled. "I guess I don't have to say anything to you then," he said. "Will you please send a message this time?"

"Can't," the guard shrugged. "Sister is still in closed cultivation, trying to break through."

"It has been 5 days you know?" Alex said to the guards. "Look, I just want to see my mother, and I'm sure she wants to see me too. It's been 6 years since we saw each other, so I'm getting a little desperate here."

The guards frowned a little. "Let us for a moment believe you, okay brother? What do you want me to do exactly?" he asked.

"Simply send her a message that her son is here to see her," Alex said.

"That's the problem, brother. Sister Hei is in closed cultivation and we can't help you at all," the guard said.

"Since you call my mother you sister, I shall call you uncle. Please help this nephew of yours by getting him to meet his mother," Alex said.

The guard frowned a little. "You know, after seeing you come here, we have had a lot of other young cultivators come here jokingly, calling sister Hei their mother," the guard said.

"They have?" Alex was surprised.

"Yeah," the guards said.

"Have they been as persistent as me?" Alex asked.

"Sigh, no," the guard said.

"Then, can you help me please, uncle," Alex said.

The guard hesitated a little more and finally gave in. "Fine, but I can't send a message to sister Hei at all," he said.

"Oh, who will you be messaging then?" Alex asked.

"Her master," the guard said.

"Sect Master Qin?" Alex asked.

"Yes," the guard said. "You scared? You can give up now."

"No," Alex shouted. "In fact, that's amazing. I'm one step closer to seeing my mother. Why would I be scared?"

"Sigh, you are something, little bro— Nephew," the guard said and brought out a talisman.

"Can you tell me your name? I will need to record it and send it to sect master later," the guard said.

"Yes, my name is Yu Ming," Alex said.

"Right, do you belong somewhere? A sect or a clan? Or are you a rogue cultivator?" the guard asked.

"Uhh... I guess I'm a rogue cultivator for now," Alex said. "Unless the Alchemy guild counts as something."

"Oh, you're part of the alchemy guild? Are you a staff there?" the guard asked.

"Oh no, I'm an alchemist," Alex said.

"Alchemist? Can you prove it?" the guard asked after a moment of hesitation.

"Sure," Alex said as he brought out the badge from within his robes.

"True Earth Alchemist? Woah, that's amazing. You're so young too," the guard sounded shocked. "Why didn't you show it earlier?"

"Eh? Would this have helped me get in contact with my mother?" Alex asked.

"Uh, no. Even True Heaven would get you the same result, but it would have stopped us from laughing at you for coming here every day," the guard said.

"I'm ready to be laughed at if it means I get to meet mother," Alex said.

"Ooh, I like your determination, nephew," the guard joked. "Go back for today, I will get this information to sect master. He will do with it what he wants to do."

"Thank you, Uncle," Alex said and walked back to the alchemy guild.

One of the other guards that was done dealing with the guests came towards this guard when he saw Alex leave.

"He came once again?" the other guard asked.

"Yes, he's persistent for sure. He even called me uncle today," the guard said.



"Poor guy, I wonder if it is really true," the other guard asked.

"Don't know, but we may find out tomorrow," the guard said.

"Eh, why?" the other guard asked.

"I'm going to deliver the information to sect master tonight," the guard waved the talisman.

He ignored the other guard's complicated look and got back to work.

Once night fell and the other guards came to take their place, the guard that Alex had talked to walked back into the sect towards the sect master's abode.

He looked at the house at the feet of the mountain where their Sister Hei was cultivating at the moment and directly walked towards the top of the mountain.

Once he reached the top, he saw a few guards there and greeted them.

"I need to see sect master," the man said.

"Is it important?" the guard of the mountain asked.

"I cannot judge it for myself, which is why I'm here to seek sect master's help," the man said.

"Well, you better hope it's important," the guard said. "What is it that you need?"

The man quickly explained the situation causing the guard to frown. "That's obviously false, you idiot," the guard said.

"Are you willing to take the risk?" the man asked, causing the guard to retreat a few of his words.

"Fine, I'll get it to him," the guard grabbed the talisman and went towards the sect master's abode.

He was able to go in freely because he knew that the sect master wasn't in cultivation or anything. In fact, he had been entertaining some of the bigger guests that couldn't simply be told no to.

When the old man with the long, thin mustache felt the guard approaching, he excused himself out of the room.

"What is it? Why are you here?" the sect master asked.

"Sect master, someone who keeps claiming to be sister Hei's son keeps coming to the sect requesting to see her," the guard said.

"What?" the old man quickly took the talisman and looked over it. "Early 20s? Yu Ming? None of this sounds true."

"What should we do then?" the guard asked. "Should we punish him for lying?"

The sect master glared at the guard for even suggesting such a thing. He stared back at the talisman. While the information was wrong... a son had come.

The old man's eyes suddenly changed as he thought, 'even if this is false... this can help me.'

"Tell the guards to inform me directly when this person arrives tomorrow," the old man said.

"Yes, sect master," the guard said and ran back.

The sect master turned and returned back to the room full of individuals from great sects and clans.

"Sorry about that. Something small came up," he said as he entered the room.

"No worries, no worries," one of the men sitting in the room said.

"So, where were we?" the old man asked, and as soon as he did, he regretted it.

"Of course, we were talking about your disciple's marriage," one of the old men said. "My son is already a True King 5th realm at the mere age of 50. Your daughter and my son would make a great couple."

"What are you saying, you senile old fool. My nephew is a True Earth formation master, on the verge of becoming a True Heaven formation master. Hei Lin would do better with my son than you," another man said.

The sect master Qin started frowning again when he heard them. 'Dammit! If my disciple hadn't been so old, none of this would be happening. Just because they think she's out of her prime, they come here trying to jump at her like vultures seeing dead meat,' the sect master thought. 'Sigh, this wouldn't have been happening had I found her just 2 decades ago. At that time, she would've shocked the empire with her talent.'

One of the older men that wore a cyan robe started speaking.

"True Heaven talisman experts are hard to come by already. Even if they're on the verge of it, one cannot necessarily go above it."

"However, the difficulty gets so much larger once you try to become a True Immortal talisman expert. The amount of resources you will require is just insane."

"If you don't get that soon, I don't see your disciple advancing any further than she already has, brother Qin. Her skill is great, but skill is not all that is necessary to become an expert. You need cultivation as well."

"She isn't young and in her prime like nephew Tian Ye here. Just being able to reach second place in the competition alone is an amazing feat, but I'm afraid that's the last thing she will ever do."

"So in my eyes, the only way to improve her cultivation quickly is to get her to marry a person of great backing. You may choose the young men these two brothers have brought along, or you may choose someone of your own, but you must choose soon," the man finished talking.

'You only say that because you don't know how great my disciple is. Her talent is beyond any of you fools.'

'You think I will let such a precious disciple of mine get taken away by swine who don't deserve her at all? Keep dreaming,' the old man Qin thought to himself, which was different from what he said on the outside.

"Yes, I'm afraid I must do something like that in the end, but I also have to think of my disciple's feeling, you know. She's not mine to simply wed her away," the sect master said.

"Right, call your disciple here. You can't just keep her hidden forever, you know," one of the elders said.

"Right, sect master. I came all the way to converse with sister Hei, and I still haven't gotten the chance to," Tian Ye, the fatty spoke from the side.

"Nephew Ye, I'm afraid it's not possible right now. She's still in deep cultivation," the old man said.

"I see," the fatty said dejectedly.

'Hmm, is there perhaps a problem with her breakthrough? Is she stuck?' Tian Ye thought.

'Maybe I should go get some help for her.'

Alex spent the night inside the alchemy room doing nothing but cultivating. He had taken a particularly large Alchemy task that would normally take about 10 hours for a normal cultivator.

However, he had finished it in just 3 hours and had spent the remainder of the time simply cultivating.

Alex walked out of the room a bit after noon and looked outside. It was just an hour before he got to meet his mother again.

'I can do one more pill,' Alex thought and walked out from the back of the guild to the front where the mission board lay.

As he was about to place his badge on the carved spots, he heard someone shouting behind him.

"Hey, you!"

Alex continued with his task, wondering why someone would dare be rowdy in the guild.

"Can you turn around, please?" the voice continued. "I'm talking to you, the one with the missing arm."

Alex stopped and finally turned around. When he did, he came face to face with someone he didn't expect to see here at all.

Fatty Tian Ye.

"Brother, are you an alchemist?" Tian Ye asked.

"Yes," Alex said, while at the same time a little surprised at the fact that the fatty was still in the city. He would've expected him to leave already after being rejected.

"Good, good. Can you check for me if someone has taken up my order yet?" he asked.

"Uhh... sure, what's your order?" Alex asked.

"Lord Clearance Pill. 40%," the fatty said.

"Hmm... let's see," Alex placed the badge on the carving and started looking.

"Ah, found it. It's not been taken yet," Alex said as he looked at the mission. This was a simple pill that wasn't different from the Disciple Ascendance pill, only this one worked for the Lord realm cultivators.

'Why would he need one? Isn't he a True King?' Alex wondered. Still, this was a pill for him to make and he needed to pass some time.

"Alright, I've taken up the order. You will get your pill soon," Alex said.

"What? No!" the fatty shouted.

Alex stopped. "Did you not want your pill to be made?" Alex asked with a confused look.

"Of course I do! But, not by you," the fatty said.

Alex felt a tinge of anger when he heard that. "Why? What's wrong with me?" he asked.

"You... you... you're a bronze. I'm afraid you will mess up my order," Fatty said.

"Then you shouldn't have put up an order a bronze could take," Alex asked. "Don't worry. If I mess it up, I will compensate for the loss. That's guild orders. You should know that."

"I... I'm not worried about losing money or ingredients. I'm worried about losing time," the fatty said. "There's someone who needs this pill desperately right now. She's been cultivating for 6 days already, and still hasn't broken through."

Alex paused in his steps. As the pieces fell together, Alex understood who the fatty was talking about.

'He's buying this pill for my mother?' he thought curiously. 'No way he's trying to marry my mother too right? He's nearly 15 years younger.'

"Don't worry, brother. I will make your pill. Besides, I can't give back a mission I've already taken," Alex said. After that, he left the outer hall and went to the back, leaving a nervous Tian Ye waiting outside.

Once Alex was in the alchemy room, he got the ingredients. He looked at the two sets of ingredients and wondered, 'Does my mother even need pills?'

Alex still didn't know what was responsible for his very weak, almost non-existent bottlenecks. Was it his body? Or was it his spiritual roots?

Or maybe was it his talents? If it was his talents, his mother certainly didn't require the pills.

But, if it was any of the other two, he would have to do his best with the pills.

So, Alex brought himself to the best shape he could and started making a pill for his mother.

Half an hour later, he walked out with a satisfied expression.

After handing one of the pills that came out at 44%, he walked out. The fatty immediately saw him come out and jumped to his feet.

"What happened? Did you do it?" he asked.

"Yes, you can go take the pill," Alex said as he walked away from the place. He only had half an hour to arrive at the gates of the Flowing Brush sect, and it would take him just a little under that.

So, he hurried his way out of the city and went up the mountain roads all the way to the sect.

"Oh, you've come in time," the guard from yesterday said.

"About the message...?" Alex asked.

"We'll call the sect master, right now," the guards said and sent a message.

Alex had waited a few minutes for the sect master to walk out when he heard a surprised "Oh, you!" come from behind him.

He turned around to see the fatty stand not far away from him. It seemed he had come back as well.

"Hey, brother," Alex said. "Hope you like your pill."

"Yes, yes, I do," the fatty said. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to see my mother," Alex said with a smile.

"Your mother, huh? Is she an elder?" Fatty asked.

"No, she's—"

"Where is he?" a voice came from the gate catching everyone's attention.

"Sect master, here," the guard said and pointed towards Alex, who instantly stood up and readied himself.



The sect master walked out of the gates and saw Alex.

'Hmm... that's him?' the sect master Qin walked up to Alex.

"You are the one who's claiming to be my disciple's son?" the old man asked.

"Yes, sect master. I am he," Alex said with a bow.

"Huh? What? Son? Whose?" the Fatty was startled.

"What's your name?" the old man ignored Tian Ye and asked Alex.

"My name is Yu Ming," Alex said.

'Wrong name. That's not her son's name,' the old man thought with a bit of disappointment visible in his eyes. 'Sigh, but he looks close enough that I should be able to use him to dissuade the suitors.'

"Very well," the old man said. "Come, I will take you to your mother."

Alex's face brightened and he thanked the old man before walking forward.

"Wait, what's happening sect master Qin?" the fatty asked.

"Nephew Tian, can't you see? This young man says he's my disciple's son. I'm going to take him to meet her," the old man said.

"Sister Hei Lin has a son? And he's this old? No way. Why would you keep this information hidden?" the fatty asked.

"I did not hide anything. This is the first time I've seen her son too," the old man said as he turned towards Alex. "Let us hurry."

Alex felt an aura grab him and hoist him into the air before pulling him away.

He was moved fast, but not as fast as Shen Jing. So, he was perfectly fine.

He tried to look below, get a lay of the land. However, the excitement and nervousness were taking over him and he couldn't focus.

The Fatty was flying quite quickly as well, following the two of them.

At the same time, a spiritual sense touched Alex and a voice entered his mind.

"I know you're not my disciple's son, but I am in need of your help right now. Simply act like you're her son when you see her."

"Cry, call her mother, do what normal families would do. If you do that, I will grant any wish that may have brought you here."

Alex looked at the old man in surprise. 'He doesn't believe me?' Alex wondered.

Still, he nodded to give a yes to the old man. Finally, 2 minutes later they landed at the feet of a green mountain.

The moment Alex landed, he felt the aura of many True and saint realm experts appear in front of him.

Many seemingly high-ranking people were standing in front of him. Nearly everyone held a confused or annoyed look.

"Brother Qin, what is this? Your disciple has a son?" one of the old men and women asked.

"Why were we not let know about this beforehand?" the people started complaining. They had been staying here, hoping to rope in the old, but definitely talented Helen by using their family as leverage.

However, now that they learned that she had a son, marrying her into their family would only put a dark spot on their son's and nephew's images.

They couldn't stand that knowledge.

'Did the fatty let them know what was happening?' Alex wondered as he looked at the crowd.

"Brothers, sisters. Please calm down. I wasn't keeping this information from you at all. I too only came to learn about this right now."

"I haven't even checked this fact with my disciple yet. However, given how close this young man's features look like my disciples, I'm inclined to believe his story," the old man said.

"No, don't believe him," the fatty shouted. "He's an alchemist. He must be wearing an illusion formed by his pill."

The old man Qin's eyes hesitated for a moment. 'Dammit, is that true?' he wondered.

"We will find out after I ask my disciple," the old man said and walked to the house close to them and knocked on the door 3 times before entering.

The moment he was inside, he found Helen making a talisman under the lantern's light.

"Master?" she looked up surprised.

"Lin'er!" the old man said. "I need you to do something for me."

## Chapter 678: Reunion

"Oh, what is it, master?" Helen asked.

"Outside, there is a young man claiming to be your son," the old man hadn't finished speaking when Helen's eyes went wide.

"My son?" she asked.

"Sigh, don't be excited. He's a fake," the old man said, immediately deflating Helen's excitement like a knife through a balloon.

"His name is... what was it? Yu Ming, and he's missing an arm. Go out and act like he's your son. That way, we can keep your suitors at bay," the old man said.

"Suitors?" Helen asked with a curious face.

The old man shook his head and explained everything.

"But I already have a husband and a son," Helen objected.

"I know that, but how do you expect to tell that to those old foggies? Without your son and husband here, it's hard to dissuade their interest."

"If they take a dislike to our attitude, they may even work against our sect in the future," the old man said.

"Which is why this is perfect timing. Go out and hug that young man like he were your own son. Maybe cry a little too," the old man said.

"Sigh, okay master," Helen said and stood up.

"Alright, let's go."

Outside, Alex was bombarded with questions from all sides. Someone asked him his name and origin. Others asked him if this was a ploy.

And one of the old women even went as far as to ask him if someone else paid him to disrupt her nephew's marriage.

Alex simply told them his name and that he was Hei Lin's son. As for anyone that may have tried to force him to answer him, Alex let slip the bronze Alchemist badge that was hiding in his robes.

With that, there was no way anyone would dare threaten him, lest they wanted to face the wrath of an angry guild.

Alex really liked how handy the Alchemist guild badge was.

Just as he was thinking that the door opened and the old man walked out. Then, following him, the magenta-robed Hei Lin walked out.

She had an excited look on her face, but it seemed obviously fake to many eyes.

Her eyes fell on the old men and woman before slowly moving towards the right before they fell on Alex.

Alex had long hair now and was about two fingers taller than he had been 3, or rather 6 years ago. His body was also more built up, more muscular.

And he was missing an arm.

However, the face... it was a face that Helen could never forget. She could see part of herself in that face, and part of her husband. There was also a part that was unique on its own.

Helen's leg moved forward on its own as the initial facade of excitement was immediately torn down and a face with a multitude of expressions landed on her face.

Happy, excited, nervous, scared, and even a little sad. Her face held it all, and so did Alex's.

"Mother?" he cried out, his voice nearly choking as it came out.

"AI?" Helen's voice went up 2 octaves.

"Mother!" Alex said as he slowly walked ahead, but Helen was already running.

Before Alex could also run, Helen arrived in front of him and took him in a motherly embrace.

"My AI, you're okay. You're alive," she said, tears streaming down her face without her approval.

Alex couldn't hold in his tears either. "I'm so happy to see you again mother," Alex said as he too embraced her with his only hand.

Helen somehow both cried and laughed at the same time, her face slowly became a mixture of happiness and sadness.

She quickly let go of her son and held him by the shoulders to look at him with a horrified look.

"What happened to your arm?" she cried out.

Alex gave a melancholic smile. "I... lost it during a fight," he said.

"Aw, my sweet child," Helen said as she hugged him again. Alex didn't remember the last time he had felt this loved.

He smiled.

This was nice.

The elders that were standing around showed nothing on their faces, but inwardly they cringed.

'Dammit! I nearly got my son together with someone that was already married,' one thought.

'That's a trap dodged,' another one thought. Everyone thought one thing or another as they looked at the mother-son reunion.

The only one that hadn't been thinking anything was the sect master Qin.

The old man Qin's face was riddled with surprise. The change had taken place too fast for him to understand things properly.

By now, he had already guessed that the fake son he brought for his disciple was her actual son and that only served to increase his astonishment.

'What the hell? That is actually her son?' he finally thought with shock clear on his face. 'Why the hell did he not tell me his actual name then?'

Tian Ye was about to speak, but the elder from the Demon Whisper sect stopped him. This was a family reunion that they couldn't interfere in at all.

"You seem quite shocked, brother Qin," the man sent a mental message.

"N-no, I'm just happy to see my disciple reunited with her son," the sect master sent back a mental message.

"Yeah, yeah, keep lying. Well, congratulations I guess. Now, no one will pester your disciple for marriage," the man sent.

The old man Qin couldn't help but give back a wry smile.

Helen finally let go of Alex and turned toward her master. "Master, is there any way to get my son's arm back?" she asked.

Qin turned towards her for a moment and then towards Alex's arm before shaking his head. "I don't think there is a way. Maybe if the Shen young lady improves her talent, but I hear she's got nothing on her elder sister, so your son will have to wait until he reaches Saint realm," the old man said while shaking his head.

Helen's eyes teared up as she looked back at her son and took his head in an embrace again. "It's fine. Mother is here. I will think of something."

Alex wanted to say that he had a way already, but he let it be. For now, he was just happy to have his mother back.

"Uhh... Lin'er, your son is going nowhere, but I'm afraid these guests of ours probably will. They came all the way here to meet you," the old man said.

Helen quickly bowed to all the elders in front of her with her hands cupped together.

"Hei Lin greets seniors," she said.

Alex felt a little weird seeing his mother treat the others the same way he treated them.

In terms of seniority, he and his mother could be considered from the same generation, as such they were equally respectful to the elders.

That didn't make it any less awkward for him.



The elders nodded back and congratulated her for getting her son back. Helen couldn't hide her smile or her tears.

"How old are you, young man?" one of the elders asked.

"I'm Twenty... four years old," Alex said after a bit of hesitation. It was probably better to keep his actual age a secret for fear of confusion.

"Oh, 24 and already a True Earth alchemist? You have quite the talent," one of the other elders said.

"Must take after his mother then," another one spoke.

"Young man, you are at the ample age to marry. I have a niece back at home. She is what they call city toppling beauty, do you want—"

"Brother Huan, what are you doing? Are you seriously trying to rope in the son now that you didn't get the mother?" one of the elders asked directly.

"What? No. I'm just asking the young man what he wants," the elder said.

"Thank you, elder. But I have no such plans at the moment," Alex said.

"Hmm, if you do have such plans, let the sect master Qin know. He will message me," the man said.  
"Since I have seen junior Hei Lin, I will have to leave now."

"Congratulations on your performance in the competition."

Once the first man left, one after another, the people spoke some sweet words to Helen and left.

Tian Ye played with the small ceramic bottle where the pill was kept. He had brought it here to gift it to her, but it turned out the alchemist was her son.

Now, he was feeling incredibly awkward and didn't know what to do. In the end, he decided to go forward and give it to her.

"Although it's not much, Sister Hei, I hope you can accept this little gift of mine," he said as he put forth the pill.

Alex looked to the side as if not seeing what was happening in front of him, and the fatty felt grateful about it.

"Little brother Tian, you don't need to do that," Helen spoke, but the fatty didn't take the pill back.

"No, no. Just think of it as your little brother's help for you to break through without a problem," Tian Ye said. Then, he turned toward Alex and said, "Call me Uncle Tian from now on. If you ever need any help, you can use my name."

"Thank you, uncle Tian," Alex said without hesitation.

"Mmm," the fatty made a sound before saying, "I will have to return back to my sect too, so I will take my leave for now, sister Hei. Please come by the sect when you are free."

"Of course, little brother," Helen said, greeting the fatty a farewell.

Once everyone left, the sect master Qin finally turned to Alex as he said, "Inside that house. Now! I need some explanation."

## Chapter 679: Helen's Story

Alex walked into his mother's single-roomed house and made his way towards the back of the room where he could see some brush, inks on a stone slab, and a talisman laid flat on a smooth metal plate.

"Were you making talismans before I came, mother?" Alex asked.

"Oh yes, I was practicing," Helen said as she walked up to the brushes to quickly clear away the place for him to stay in.

Old man Qin walked behind them, carefully watching Alex as he found a place for him to sit in.

"Quick, tell me! Where have you been all these years? Were you on a different continent? How did you get here?" Helen asked.

"I... I was in a different part of this continent before everything went wrong," Alex said. "It was only afterward that I came to this empire."

"You are from a different empire? There's a different empire in this continent?" the old man Qin showed a shocked face.

"Yes, there is one beyond the secret realm to the north. You have to go through the secret realm if you want to cross it," Alex explained.

"Is that really true?" Qin thought to himself.

Alex wanted to ask his mother some questions and give her some information of his own, but he didn't find it comfortable telling the old man next to him.

In fact, he was already annoyed that the old man knew his real name and the fact that he was a player.

"Sect master Qin, may I request some alone time with my mother?" Alex asked.

The old man nodded. "Just answer a few questions of mine and I will leave," the old man said.

Alex nodded, "go ahead, senior."

"When did you come to the empire?" he asked.

Alex thought for a moment and said, "about 5 and a half years ago."

"5 and a half years?" the old man seemed surprised. "And how long have you been cultivating?"

Alex didn't feel fine answering this, but since the old man already knew how long he had been playing the game, he sighed and gave him the answer.

"A bit more than 6 years ago I believe," Alex said.

"Hmm, 6 years to reach True Lord 2nd realm. It makes sense for your mother to be so slow, but you have cultivated for longer than her. Why are you not of higher cultivation base?" the old man asked.

'Is this kid not as talented as his mother perhaps?' the old man wondered.

"I spent most of my last 5 years training myself, so I have neglected increasing my cultivation base a little," Alex said.

"You trained, but you neglected your cultivation?" the old man looked confused.

"I trained not only in techniques but Alchemy too. Also in some parts formations," Alex said.

"Oh, you know alchemy and formations? Not bad," the old man said.

"Yes," Alex said.

"Oh, what's your..." the old man's voice trailed off as he noticed the badge hanging on Alex's neck.

"True Earth alchemist? Woah, you really do have your mother's talent," the old man said.

"And formation? What about formations?" the old man asked.

"I haven't had the chance to enter the formation guild yet. Now that I will likely settle in this city with my mother, I intend to join it not soon after," Alex said.

"Good, good. What about talisman?" the old man asked.

Alex paused for a second and said, "I haven't had the chance to learn anything about talismans, but I do plan on learning about the runes soon so I may as well learn talismans as well."

"Yes, yes," the old man nodded more aggressively. "Say, do you want to enter the sect?"

Alex didn't even have to think about this question. "I'm sorry, sect master Qin, but I don't plan on joining any sect at the moment," Alex said.

"Are you sure? You can learn from me as your mother does," he said.

"I am sure, senior," Alex said.

"Master really does know quite a lot Al. Why don't you learn from him?" Helen asked.

"I'm not opposed to being taught, mother. I'm opposed to joining a sect, any sect," Alex said. After the Hong Wu sect and the Tiger sect, his interests in sects had dwindled quite a lot.

"Are you sure?" Helen looked at him closely as she asked.

"Yes, I'm sure," Alex said.

"I think there's nothing more to say here, Master. If my son doesn't want to join, he won't have to," Helen said.

"Sigh, alright. What about joining the sect temporarily then? You can be a guest elder and stay here with your mother."

"Although you will have to do some things here. Can you make pills for the sect?" the old man Qin asked.

"I can definitely do that. Thank you for the opportunity, sect master Qin," Alex said.

"Good! I think I'm done with my questions for now. I will leave the two of you to your own," the old man said and left.

Alex chuckled a little when he felt the thin aura of spiritual sense still hanging in the air. He brought out a formation from his storage bag and placed it on the ground before pouring in some Qi into it.

Instantly, a barrier was put up around them that blocked all senses. Alex was glad he bought this formation a couple of days ago.

The moment the barrier was up, all the questions Alex was holding back came pouring out.

"Mother, why are you here? How are you here? Is dad here too? Did you play the game too? Are you okay?" Alex asked.

"Slow down," Helen said with a chuckle. "I will explain from the start."

\* \* \* \* \*

6 years ago.

Helen was cooking some afternoon meal when a message rang on her phone. She wiped her hands on her apron and looked up the message.

-\$20,000 has been credited to your account 1223#####57-

"Oh dear, he sent so much money again," Helen thought to herself with a proud look on her face.

"What are you smiling about?" Graham, Alex's father, asked as he walked through the door.

"Look," Helen said as she showed the message to Alex's father. Even almost 10 meters away, Graham showed a surprised look when he saw the message.

"Oh, he sent money again? Well, I was getting a little worried about what he would do now that he's given up on university, but I guess he's doing quite well," Graham said.

"Of course, he would. He's our son, you know? He's the best of us," Helen said with a proud smile still on her face. Then, a thought came to her mind.

"Say, should we play the game too?" Helen asked. "We don't have much to do around here, and Liz keeps pestering me to play as well."

"Do you really want to?" Graham asked. He seemed a little hesitant.

"Yes," Helen said.

"Sigh, alright. Let's go pick one of those game machines when I have to go deliver those vegetables then," Graham said.

"Yes!" Helen said excitedly.

That night, Helen bought 2 capsules. Graham told her they didn't need 2, but she insisted.

However, she didn't let Graham enter immediately, and neither did she enter.

She spent the entire night scouring the internet learning about the different parts of the game.

"Oh, it says if you die, your character gets ruined. Also, it seems you randomly start in one of the 4 different continents," Helen said excitedly, but Graham was already asleep.

She spent a little longer learning about the game. She called Alex to learn a bit more, but he didn't pick up her call at all.

"Geez, he must already be in the game then," Helen thought. If that was the case, she would try tomorrow.

Tomorrow afternoon, Alex still didn't pick up. "What is this child doing?" Helen thought.

In the end, she decided to go into the game without asking him. That night, both she and Graham entered their capsules and jumped into the game.

When Helen opened her eyes, she found herself in a customization room where she could alter her appearance and name.

Helen chose to keep everything mostly the same and entered the game.

When the game finally started, she found herself standing on a slope next to a forest. When she looked down the slope, she found a massive city in the distance.

"Right, I need to get out of here and find out where I am," she thought as she walked toward human civilization.



"Right, Status!" she called out for her information to come up.

[Player Name: Helen

Cultivation: Mortal (1 Qi : 100%)

Body: Heaven Seeking Body

Talent: God

Spiritual Roots: 5 elements Yin-Yang roots

Cultivation Method: None

Qi: 0

]

Helen was quite satisfied with her information and checked her storage bag. She quickly went through the tutorial and opened her gift to reveal 4 different things.

She found a cultivation method, a minor talisman book, a bow, and finally a pill that improved cultivation speed.

She did what most people did and went to sell the pill. After all, she knew how simple it was to acquire Qi to start becoming a cultivator.

Once she got some money, she found herself a tavern and logged out. That was all she would do for today.

When she logged out, she found Graham already out of the capsule.

"How did it go?" she asked.

"It was okay," he said. "Did you find out where you are?"

"Ah yes," she said as she brought out her phone to check the name 'DawnSpring city.'

"According to this, " she spoke. "I'm in the Luminance Empire of the Western Continent."

#### Chapter 680: Mother-Son Conversation

"What about you?" Helen asked Graham.

"I... don't know. There's not a single thing growing in the parts I'm at. Nowhere to sell, not a human soul in sight," Graham said. "I tried... uh, doing what that thing said and sitting down, but nothing happened."

"You cultivated?" Helen asked.

"Yes, that. But it didn't work," Graham said.

"You should go try again," Helen said. "Let's stay the entire night this time."

"I need to sleep," Graham protested.

"You can sleep in the machine. It's designed that way. Go now," Helen chided and Graham reluctantly entered the capsule.

Helen followed him and entered the capsule as well. The next thing she knew, she was back in the tavern she had logged out from.

Helen decided to cultivate. She knew what she had to do. Focus your mind, let your thoughts go astray, and slowly breathe in and out.

As she thought that, Helen slowly fell into a lull and soon enough, she fell in a trance. A trance where the soul in her real body would be suppressed for the soul in her fake one.

Unfortunately, while she was cultivating, her soul could never be suppressed by trivial formations.

Though the system tried to, her soul would always surface when she cultivated. Not that it mattered, for this would be the last time the fake soul ever stayed in her body.

While the fake soul was logged out with a random disconnection prompt, Helen opened her eyes in the tavern with confusion clear on her face.

"How long has it been?" she wondered and looked at the time. There was no clock in her vision.

"Setting?" she cried out but no setting came. No panels appeared.

"Log out!" she demanded, but that was impossible as well, for unbeknownst to her, Alex had destroyed the system that kept everything in order.

As such, soon her life was sent into disorder.

Helen was more fortunate than the rest of the players that surfaced after the game system's disappearance. She had her wit and with her soul never fully suppressed, she knew every single moment of what she lived through in this world.

More than that, she had information about this world that she learned through the internet. When she understood her situation, she decided to give it her all to find her son and her husband.

She didn't know what continent they were in, but she promised herself she would find them.

So, she took the one simple talisman book in her storage bag and started studying.

Months would go by before she reached a high enough level in her cultivation base that she could consistently make great talismans, and someone took notice.

Qin Shan of the Flowing Brush sect was the only Saint rank Talisman maker of DawnSpring city, one of the very few in the entire empire.

When going through new recruits in the guild, he came across Helen's speed at which she was going up in her talisman.

When she went from reaching Common Earth rank to Common Heaven rank in just mere 3 months, he understood that he had someone special in this place.

So, he met up with Helen and after seeing her absorb information like a sponge, he decided to take her in as his own disciple.

He even went as far as to make an exception for her in the sect as no one above 40 was allowed to remain a student.

At first, Old man Qin thought that he would have to spend a lot to get Helen to cultivate and reach a higher level. However, he soon realized how wrong he was.

Helen needed just the bare minimum and she could breakthrough easily. In fact, her speed of breakthrough was way too fast if she only focused on it.

So as to not bring up suspicion, he made her not cultivate at all most of the time and only made her focus on making talismans.

Soon, her talent shone through that as well.

\* \* \* \* \*

"And then he made you take part in the competition?" Alex asked.

"Yes, partly to improve the sect's name. Partly to help get my own name and image into the world so that you would see me if you were in this continent," Helen said. "I'm glad it worked."

Alex nodded and asked, "I suspected your talent to be high but to think you had God-grade talent as well. Not to mention, our spiritual roots are the same. Hmm... I wonder if you can take the White Tiger's blood as well?"

Alex had barely thought for a second before shaking his head. "No, you need the body more than the roots. While your body constitution sounds great on paper, if I'm not wrong, it's a Heaven Grade body," Alex said.

Helen nodded. "It was considered an above-average grade for most players," she said.

"Right, did father mention his status at all? What his body was, or what his talent was?" Alex asked.

Helen sighed and shook her head. "Your father said nothing. He couldn't even cultivate where he was," Helen said. "Honestly, I worried about him more than I worried about you. At least you were already doing good with earning so much money, but him... sigh."

Alex sighed as well. 'Place where you can't cultivate... that just sounds like...,' Alex thought of a place before another thought occurred to him.

"Do you really remember entering the game and coming back out?" he asked.

"Yes, I do," Helen said.

"I see," Alex said with a thoughtful. "So our souls must not be swapped unless we sit down and cultivate."

"Souls swapped? What do you mean?" Helen asked with a confused look.

"It's like this," Alex said and proceeded to explain everything he could think of to explain.

Partway through, his own story mixed into the things as it became impossible to explain everything without telling where he learned it all.

He told her about the book of the Alchemy God, his two masters, Pearl, Beast realm, and finally the fight he had to go through in the desert beyond the Forbidden Fields.

He tried to skip over Ma Rong's death and the empty space his heart still held, but he couldn't do that. Halfway through, his eyes became misty as he explained it all to his mother.

Helen hugged him once more and pat his head.

After a while, she let go and asked, "wait, does that mean there is another me and you back on the 5th continent?"

Alex was about to answer when he finally understood what that question meant. 'Wait, then I don't have to find my way home?' he thought to himself.

He still wanted to meet sister Hao and the creator, and learn why they did what they did. Why they risked the lives of many... No, killed so many just for a game? Was there a hidden purpose? Or was this just entertainment for a god that was easily bored?

He felt a shift in his motivation from finding a home to finding answers.

Helen saw her son go quiet and wondered if she said something to remind him of something bad. So, she quickly decided to change the conversation topic.

"You mentioned a pet, right? where is he?" she asked.

"Ah yes," Alex came out of his stupefied expression and brought out Pearl from his beast space.

In a bright white light, the tiny and cute cat jumped in front of Helen with his head held high.

He looked at Helen with a confused look and then turned back to Alex. "Pearl, meet my mother," he said.

"Meow?" Pearl said.

"Aw, come here little one," Helen said as she lay her hands flat for Pearl to jump on top of it. After Pearl climbed on top of it, she brought him up to eye level as she used one hand to rub his tiny head.

"Hello, Pearl," she said with a smile.

Alex smiled and gave a mental command to Pearl.

"Hello, mother," Pearl said with a smug smile on his face.

"What?" Helen was shocked a little when she heard the cat speak. "Wh-what? what? Is he like a parrot?" she asked.

"I'm Pearl, not a parrot, mother," Pearl said.

"Wait, can you really speak?" she looked at him with her shock fixed on her face.

"Yes, I can," Pearl said.

Only after a minute did the shock wane from her face and a look of incredulity appeared on it.

"Wow, I can't believe there is a beast out there that can speak," she said.

"There are many that can do that, mother," Alex said. "Although I've only seen 2 that can do so at True realm, all Saint realm beasts are able to speak."

"Do they learn it from somewhere?" Helen asked.

"No, they just..." Alex stopped. Wait. Where did the saint beasts learn to speak the human, no demon language?

No, that was wrong too. Both Human and Demon language was the same, just written differently. Yao Jia had told him so.

'So everyone in this world just knows how to speak one language?' he wondered. 'How did we come to learn that same language despite being isolated for so long too?'

There were a lot of questions for him to think of, but unfortunately, the other him hadn't spoken aloud a lot of things for him to remember his words. So, Alex was not privy to a lot of information that was simply in the other Alex's mind.

He remembered the other him talking about a few things and had pieced most of it together, but some information clearly still missed.

He couldn't help but wonder, 'What else do I still not remember from back home?'