

Alchemy 681

Chapter 681: Sect and Clan

Alex and Helen talked with each other for the rest of the day and the entire night. Helen didn't bother to cultivate or train as she heard her son's stories.

When he learned that he had been in what was practically their backyard for 2 whole years, she was very shocked.

Although, perhaps not as shocked as when she learned that her son who she assumed was 24 years old was actually only 21 years right now.

When Alex told her that he lost 3 years in just 3 days, Helen's face made a very understandable surprised expression.

It wasn't every day you heard of someone time traveling.

Alex also showed his mother the little mouse he had, which she wasn't surprised by very much. After all, with the speaking Pearl in her hand, it was hard to bring any other beast that could surprise her.

Although, when she learned that the little mouse was born not long ago and that he needed a name, she aptly decided to call him Whiskers for his extraordinarily long whiskers. Alex thought of protesting, but he swallowed the thought in the end and let it be.

Its name wasn't very important to Alex as Pearl, at least not yet.

Alex was telling his mother how pills were made exactly when he heard a knock on the door. He quickly turned off the formation and walked to the door.

When he opened it, he saw the guard that had helped him waiting with a surprised look.

"Greetings, uncle," Alex said.

The man gave a wry smile. "To think you really were sister Hei's son. Congrats on meeting your mother finally," he said.

"Thank you," Alex replied.

"Are you done with your reunion? The sect master wants me to show you around the sect," he said.

"Oh, okay. One moment," Alex said and returned back to the room. "Mother, I'll be back in a bit. The sect master wants me to see the sect. Pearl should keep you company."

"I will stay with mother," Pearl said from the side.

"Yes, you will," Helen said with a smile as she petted Pearl.

Alex nodded and left. "Let's go," he said to the man and walked out.

"What's your name, uncle?," Alex asked the man.

"Zhou Ji," the man said.

Alex gave a surprised look. "From THE Zhou clan?" he asked, remembering the white robes with burnt edges of the young man named Zhou Ren back in the demon realm.

"More of a side branch, but yes," Zhou Ji said.

"I see," Alex said. "I didn't think a big clan like Zhou would let their juniors choose another sect instead of teaching them in the clan."

"The clan only bothers teaching people who were born with the ability to create White Fire," Zhou Ji said with a sad smile. "I never was."

"White Fire?" Alex asked with a curious look.

"Do you not know about the Zhou clan's White Fire? It's what made us famous in the first place," Zhou Ji said.

"I'm afraid I don't know much about the great clans of the Luminance empire," Alex said. "I planned on reading about it, but one thing led to another and I keep putting it off."

Then Alex thought of something and said, "Would you mind telling me what you can about the different families while we take this walk, Uncle Ji?"

"Uh, sure. I don't mind," the man said and soon Alex started learning about both the sect and the different families.

While the Flowing Brush sect was primarily a talisman-centric sect, it also had a small group of disciples that joined it simply to learn cultivation as a whole.

So, the sect was divided into two groups, which included both disciples and elders. The only difference this brought was that the small group that wasn't interested in talisman only got a small section of the sect to work with.

However, there was no difference when it came to how they were treated. According to Zhou Ji, one could only remain a student until 40 years of age. After that, they had either leave or go through a test to become an elder of the sect.

'That's not very different to how it is back in the Crimson Empire,' he thought.

The sect itself had multiple mountains, most of which were not even inhabited. It was only the few 10 to 12 mountains that were truly full of people.

The disciples lived in 5 of the 12 mountains, with only 1 belonging to those that weren't part of the talisman group.

Of the other 6, 3 of them house the Sect master, sect elders, and the guest elders as well as guests of the sect.

Finally, of the remaining 3, 2 were used for practicing talismans and 1 was used for everything else that ranged from disciple hall to Law enforcement hall of the sect.

The rest of the miscellaneous events and lectures took place in the small flat valley that lay between the mountains, directly after entering the sect.

When Alex asked what they did for the talisman ingredients, Zhou Ji told him that they either bought the ingredients or simply sent the students towards the other 16 or so uninhabited mountains to search for it.

If neither way proved successful, they would start a small expedition group to go to the eastern mountains.

Alex nodded to himself when he heard that as that seemed to be the best of ways.

After explaining about the mountain, Zhou Ji took Alex to actually see said mountains. During this time, he decided to explain what little he could about the 7 great families.

Zhou clan got famous after their progenitor developed his White Fire technique to such a level that it was ingrained into his blood essence and thus most of his descendants were born with the White Fire as a bloodline ability.

Because of this, the Zhou clan was represented with the color white.

White Fire could reach temperatures that normal fire struggled to get to with the same amount of Qi. So, the Zhou clan ended up being recognized as one of the better clans.

It was said that the progenitor gained the White Flame from the demon realm, but no one knew if there was any truth in that.

"The Han family," Zhou Ji spoke while pointing towards the west where the Han ancestral home lay and said, "they are just a bunch of people with an incredible physique."

"They are body cultivators right?" Alex asked, remembering Han Daiyu's impressive strength.

"Uh... not exactly?" Zhou Ji said. "I don't understand the difference myself but I believe theirs is a result of a technique while real body cultivators temper their body through pain and torture."

"They practiced a technique that gave their body incredible strength. What I know, their body itself isn't good at defending, just exerting a lot of strength," Zhou Ji said.

"Oh, so they are half a body cultivator in a sense," Alex asked.

"Maybe even less," Zhou Ji said. "From what I hear, their endurance is better than most people but not as good as what a real body cultivator could reach. Their healing capability is normal, and their longevity doesn't increase either, despite being of a strong body."

"Oh," Alex said. 'So in a sense, Pearl's body isn't a result of body cultivation, but is a physique huh? While mine is fully body cultivation.'

'So White Tiger's Dominating Body is the name of his physique probably,' Alex thought.

"I saw Han Daiyu using a hammer. Is the Han family's main weapon of choice that?" Alex asked.

"Uh... not necessarily. They use what they can to exert their strength. Hammer is usually the best weapon for that," Zhou Ji explained.

The Han Family's physique technique could only be used by those that had a good Earth spiritual root, so they took the color brown.

He took him to the disciple mountains next and explained about the Jin family.

The Jin Family was a family of swordsmen. They came to power after their progenitor found a sword manual during the meteor shower over a thousand years ago.

He shocked the empire back then with his strength and established the Jin family. It is said that the progenitor still lived, but no one had seen him in centuries to know if that was true or not.

The Jin family used a particularly fierce technique that employed 12 swords at once, and as such with metal being affiliated to their clan, they took the color Gold.

"The Lu family is perhaps the simplest out of everyone in the 7 different clans. Their family is simple in that they are usually born with a better wood spiritual root and as such use the powers of wood and wind," Zhou Ji said.

"While it is simple, don't misunderstand that for it being weak. The Lu ancestor is said to be able to create wind so fierce that it will rip the skin off your face before you can beg him to stop," Zhou Ji said.

"Because of that, they are also affiliated with the color Green," he said.

Alex nodded as he listened to the information.

White, Brown, Gold, and Green. Alex had initially expected them to be simple clans that were primarily focused on one of the 7 elements.

Such as White being Yang, Brown being Earth, Gold being Metal, and Green being Wood. Now, it turned out that he was only right on one account and wrong on the rest of the 3.

Zhou Ji didn't notice Alex falling into thought and continued.

"Next up is the Shen family."

Chapter 682: Qi-like Aura

The Shen family was a family that mostly used water techniques as Alex had expected. However, they also had a secret healing technique that they had apparently found in the meteor shower.

From what Zhou Ji said, Alex understood that one needed to have a very good Water spiritual root to make the most of that technique.

'So, the little sister must have worse spiritual roots than the sister that died,' Alex thought. He couldn't help but wonder how his own senior sister would do if he took that technique to her.

Thinking about it, he started missing Luo Mei and the others again.

Zhou Ji reached the guest elder's mountain and started explaining about the Fu family.

"Fu family is a family full of mental attack users. I believe it started off as a family of fire users, but slowly, over the course of millennia, they shifted to using mental attacks, especially their spiritual sense," Zhou Ji said.

"They also have some terrifying knowledge of formations that most others don't know of. That makes fighting against them hard since you don't know what they will bring out," he said.

Alex nodded when he heard that. He had fought with that girl that could in fact use both strong mental attacks and formations.

Alex didn't know why they had strong mental attacks, but that certainly lined up with what the Royal Fu family could use as well.

After all, it was Zexi who used the memory scouring skill to enter his mind. That was certainly something his grandfather brought from the Fu family of this empire.

As for formations, Fu Tao had told him that their grandfather had found a great book about formations from the meteor shower and had become a great formation maker.

Alex wanted to know what informations he had, but he didn't know how he could possibly approach that.

'So their crimson robe has nothing to do to reflect their skill or abilities, but rather something historic that they just didn't bother to change huh?' Alex thought.

"Next up, perhaps the weirdest family out there. The Song Family," Zhou Ji said.

"Yes, I saw one of them use blood. What's that about?" Alex asked.

"The Song family is known to use blood Qi," Zhou Ji said.

"Blood Qi? I've never heard of such a thing before," Alex said.

"And I wouldn't doubt that. Unless you see or hear about the Song family, you likely wouldn't hear about Blood Qi at all," Zhou Ji said.

"Is Blood Qi something born of a mutant spiritual root?" Alex asked. He wondered if it was something like people being only able to use wind or ice because that was the spiritual root they were born with.

"No, it's not Qi specifically but is more of an aura. But since it acts just like Qi, as in you can absorb it to enhance your cultivation and such, so people just call it Blood Qi for convenience's sake," Zhou Ji said.

"That's quite complicated then. I'm assuming they can't just cultivate blood Qi then like the rest of us cultivate daily," Alex asked.

"I don't think they do. They simply use blood for techniques and such that they themselves developed. Usually, it's their own blood that they can freely manipulate, but sometimes they end up using others' blood as well," Zhou Ji said.

Alex nodded to himself as he heard that.

"Honestly, I'm really not sure how this all works. Just that they have the ability to use blood," Zhou Ji said.

"If they use blood, is there a reason why they don't have the red color, and instead Fu family does?" Alex asked.

"It's just a first come first thing. Since the Fu family wore red first, the Song family that came afterward were forced to choose a different color."

"In the end, they chose black," Zhou Ji said. "Not that it matters, since they still wear red."

Zhou Ji took Alex finally to the elders' hall where he got an elders badge that gave him the authority a guest elder did.

Not that he would ever use that authority. After all, Alex was perhaps the youngest of them all here, not counting those that had yet to enter the True realms.

So, he would better just steer clear of using his authority over those that were older than him by quite a lot.

The tour was over when Alex was returned back to the sect master's mountain with a new house being built right next to Helen's house.

"Your abode should be completed by evening time. Please bear with us for now," Zhou Ji said. "I will take my leave then."

"Thank you for the tour and those explanations," Alex said as Zhou Ji left. Alex returned back to his mother at around noon.

"You took quite some time to return," she said. "Did you go around the whole sect?"

"Yes," Alex said.

"Come, sit. I have so many more questions now that I had time to think about it all," Helen said.

Alex nodded with a smile and sat next to his mother as he answered her question.

They talked until the sunset and someone came to inform him of the house was ready. Alex thanked them and returned back to the room.

"I'll go to my room for now mother," Alex said.

"Eh? But I was planning to teach you about talismans tonight. Don't you want to learn about them?" she asked.

"I do," Alex said. "But not today. I have something important to attend to tomorrow, but after that is done, you can start teaching me."

"Oh, what are you doing tomorrow?" Helen asked.

"Uh, why don't I make it a surprise?" Alex said.

"Oh, you're keeping secrets from your mother now just because you've become a few years older?" Helen asked with a slight pout on her face.

"Uh... do you really want to know?" Alex asked.

"Haha, I'm joking, obviously," Helen said with a light chuckle.

"Oh," Alex said. "Alright, come on Pearl."

"Eh? You're taking Pearl? He can stay with me," Helen said.

"No, you have some things to do, so I can't really let him stay here and disturb you," Alex said.

"No, I won't disturb mother," Pearl said.

"I have nothing to do really. I just need to make some talisman for practice is all," Helen said.

"Well, then here. I give you more tasks," Alex said as he dropped two flowers of red and yellow color in her hand.

Helen looked confused for a second, "What's this?" she asked.

"It's a Spirit Cleansing Lily," Alex explained. "If you cultivate while holding that, it will open up your spiritual sea and allow you to use your spiritual sense."

"What? Spiritual sense?" Helen gave a surprised look. "Ah right, I have heard about these things. I remember now."

She looked down at the flowers in her hand. The 5 petal lily looked quite ordinary to her eyes. She couldn't believe that it was actually something that could help open her spiritual sense.

"Sh-should I tell master about this?" she asked.

Alex thought for a bit and said, "Sure, but after you've used it. Just in case he doesn't take one of it away."

"Eh? Isn't using just one enough for me though?" she asked. "I hear getting just one is very difficult. I have to say I'm surprised to see 2 of them at the same time."

"It's hard for others, but not for me," Alex said. "I have that alchemy knowledge about ingredients which subtly helps when picking ingredients."

"It's like I have someone else's instinct inside of me."

"As for using two, you can actually use up to 3 of them, each giving you an equal amount of spiritual sense. It's quite unnoticeable when compared to saint rank, but for a True realm cultivator, it's plenty," Alex said.

"Honestly, I would give you three, but I only have those two with me at the moment. If in the future I ever do find some more, I will bring you back some," she said.

Helen stared at the flower and asked, "have you used it?"

"Yes, all 3," He said. "It is more helpful the lower your cultivation base is. Especially if you haven't improved past Meridian tempering realm since the Mind Tempering realm has a lot of benefits if your spiritual sea is already open."

"I will get some pills for you to improve on that aspect, but for now just cultivate," he said. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Chapter 683: Proud

Alex entered his new home and was more than surprised with how well it was for something that was prepared just moments ago.

It looked exactly the same as his mother's in that there was a single room. But that was more than enough for him.

He would've loved to have some furnace in the middle for his alchemy, but it was understandable that they couldn't set it up in just a single day.

'So, I will have to go to the guild for a while longer huh? I hope they can prepare it in time,' Alex thought to himself.

From what he heard, they had to bring a formation expert to make sure that the formation that would run the furnace was properly integrated into the formation that ran the whole sect.

'I wonder why they don't use runes instead. It's the same thing, right?' he wondered. But then again, he didn't even know the first thing about runes and how they worked, so he didn't really have any authority to speak in these matters.

When Alex really thought about it, he realized that he wasn't that knowledgeable about formations either.

He mostly just followed recipes instead of creating one himself from the knowledge he had.

The only creating he had done were those pills he made back when he was stuck in that formation for a month.

'Now that I have some more information about ingredients and such, I should be able to create new pills,' he thought. 'That should help prepare me for when a Blood Spirit Ginseng comes on the market.'

Alex had nothing better to do, so he and Pearl cultivated the entire night, waiting for the morning to arrive.

When it did, Alex left his room and went back to the city.

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Helen opened her eyes a little later than usual. She couldn't tell why she was late waking up today, but something in her told her that she couldn't wake up very early.

She looked down at her hand and realized that the two flowers she had been holding were gone.

'Is it done?' she wondered as she looked around. 'I can't see anything different.'

The moment she thought that, as if growing eyes all around her, she noticed everything in her vicinity.

Her mind was boggled at the amount of information that she received. Seeing the walls, the floor, the ceiling, the wood, the grains in the wood, etc all felt very weird to her.

She tried moving her 'eyes' and looked elsewhere. She looked at her own clothes she was wearing. Never before had her robe seen this unsightly to her.

She noticed all the creases on it, the frayed threads that came out at different places that would not be noticeable otherwise.

She noticed her long hair and how beautiful it really was. She would see her face and all the tiny blemishes on it.

It was so much better than what she used to have before she became a cultivator. She couldn't help but admire it.

Her spiritual sense started extending outwards and soon it escaped past the boundaries of her room and nearly reached her son's place.

However, it stopped just before it touched that house. Helen made a mental measurement and thought '50 meters?'. That was the extent of what she could reach with her senses.

She tried to go further and forced her mind to follow her will. Surprisingly for her, it worked and her spiritual sense entered the room easily.

She wanted to see her son inside, but he was gone already. She felt the light mental strain from her sense and immediately pulled it back.

'I can't extend it very far?' she thought to herself.

Once she was done reveling in her level up, she started remembering all the benefits one gained from having a spiritual sense.

First, she could see and, in some ways, touch something with her spiritual sense.

Second, it increased her mental capability to the point that she no longer required artifacts to protect herself from mental attacks. She simply needed some protection techniques.

Getting those techniques was a little difficult, but not very much when compared to getting spiritual sense itself.

Third, it gave her a very good memory, which would come in very handy for someone that was trying to learn Talismans.

Lastly, she could also use mental attacks, but the fighting had never really been Helen's interest before. She was more in tune with creation than destruction.

When Helen thought about her mental strength is very high now, she decided to try out making some more Talismans to see how they helped her.

After 2 hours, Helen's eyes were properly wide when she realized she could keep going for a very long time and make as many talismans in a single day as she could in a week before.

"With this, I should be able to increase my alignment by quite a bit. Given how the brush helped me reach 72%, with my spiritual sense I should be able to reach the immortal grade now," she thought.

Immortal grade, as far as she understood, went from 75% to 100% Alignment. That was what her master had told her and what she had learned before coming to the game too.

That only made her more confused when he understood that there were grades higher than that for other things.

She quickly had come to the understanding that the other grades simply didn't exist. If you threw away the arbitrary system of giving grades to a percentage of alignment, you would remain with a simple system that graded something from 0% to 100%

That was all one needed anyway.

She excitedly brought out her Saint grade brush that she hadn't brought out for the current testing purposes and started making another talisman.

The brush dipped into the ink, and it retained a certain amount as per her wish. Then, she placed the brush on the empty paper and started drawing.

Her spiritual sense was on the paper at all times, so she could clearly see everything. She saw how many bristles of the brush actually touched the picture.

She saw the flow at which the ink left the brush and remained on the paper. She saw those tiny, almost imperceptible lines of ink that were at the very edge of those lines she drew.

As she got more and more conscious of what little mistakes she was making, she started fixing them going forward. By the end of it in 20 minutes, Helen ended up with a talisman she knew would make her master proud.

76%

That was the alignment she had reached with her new brush and her new sense.

Helen realized that even after that daunting 20 minutes, she could still make more.

So, she brought out another empty piece of talisman paper and got ready to draw.

However, just as she was about to proceed, she heard a knock on the door. Usually, she would call to ask who it was. This time, she simply sent out her spiritual sense and saw that it was her son.

Alex sensed his mother's spiritual sense and smiled.

"Congratulations, mother," he sent her a message directly into her mind.

"Woah!" Helen freaked out a little. "Right, I forgot you could do that with a spiritual sense."

"Uh... can I come in?" he asked.

"Oh right, come, come," she hurriedly called him in.

Alex opened the door and entered. As he did, Pearl also came out from his space and ran up to Helen.

"Mother, I missed you," he said as he jumped into her lap.

"Aw, I missed you too," Helen said as she started petting him.

Pearl meowed and then closed his eyes with a smile on his face.

Helen chuckled a little and looked back at her son. "Where were you gone?" she asked.

"To the city," Alex said.

"Did you do what you meant to do?" she asked.

"Yes," Alex gave her a bright smile.

"And... that's the surprise?" she gave a quizzing look as if expecting something.

"Hehe," Alex gave her a wide grin as he reached into his storage bag. "Here it is!"

Helen saw something white hanging on a piece of string. She couldn't tell what it was immediately, so she sent her spiritual sense to look at it.

Finally, she could see the silvery-white circular metal as clear as day. It hung by a thin but strong string that one could easily put around their neck.

She looked at the metal itself, silver, which was about 5 to 7 centimeters in diameter.

And then she noticed the carvings.

On one side, it said 'Alchemist Guild' in big and bold letters. On the other side, there was a simple 'True' written on it, surrounded by leaves and vines.

This had been so sudden that Helen took a second to put 2 and 2 together. When she did, her expression was priceless.

With wide eyes and mouth hung open, she stared at Alex for a good 10 seconds before she spoke, "You became a True Heaven Alchemist?"

"Surprise!" Alex said.

"Really?" she asked again.

"Yes," Alex said and walked closer. "Here."

Helen checked the badge and as expected, it was the same as her. Only, hers was from the Talisman guild.

"Come here," Helen called and Alex walked closer.

Suddenly, she grabbed his head and pulled it closer to give him a kiss on his forehead. Then she held his head for a second as she said, "I'm so proud of you son."

Alex looked with a stunned expression for a second as he had never known before how much he had needed this.

His motivation and enthusiasm practically doubled at this very moment as he gave her his bright smile again.

"Just watch mother, your son will make you prouder."

Chapter 684: Homeschooled

Qin Shan walked to his disciple's room late afternoon. He had been too busy with the tasks in the sect he had kept off from doing due to the arrival of so many guests.

Now that they were gone, he was forced to do everything.

Only now had he finished the task he started a day and a half ago.

Wondering if Alex was with his mother or not, Qin Shan knocked on the door.

Suddenly, he felt a wave of spiritual sense and heard the words, "Come in, master" from inside the room.

Qin Shan paused a moment to understand what had just happened. When he realized that his disciple had used a spiritual sense, he quickly opened the door and entered.

"Lin'er, did you just?" he hurriedly asked as he walked inside.

"Master, I can use spiritual sense now," she shouted.

"How?" the old man gave a confused look and even checked his disciple's cultivation base to make sure she hadn't broken through.

Seeing his puzzled look, Helen answered. "My son brought me the... what was it called? Spirit Cleansing Lily."

"What?" Qin Shan gave a surprised look. "Young man, you gave your mother that flower? Where did you find it?"

"My son, he—"

"I was given it by the person that trained me," Alex said, cutting off his mother.

Helen gave him a weird look and said nothing.

"Wow!" Qin Shan still had a hard time believing it. "That means your mother's talismans will become a lot better. Not only that, she will be able to make a lot of them as well."

"Yes, her spiritual sense should help her improve on the minor imperfections that is impossible without a spiritual sense," Alex said.

But then, he gave them a confused look. "Wait, what does having a spiritual sense have to do with making many talismans?" he asked.

"Opening your spiritual sea allows your mind to get stronger and last longer when doing such production tasks. Since making talisman is so draining, having a strong mind helps a lot," Qin Shan said.

"Oh," Alex said with clear surprise written on his face. "I didn't know talisman did that."

"Huh?" Qin Shan made a confused noise. "It's not just talisman. All of them are like that. Whether you make pills, formations, or artifacts, they all consume a lot of mental strength, which is why not many are able to do that one after another," Qin Shan said.

"I see," Alex said as he fell into thought. 'All this time I had thought I could make more pills than others because I had better Qi than others. Turns out it was actually my spiritual sense,' he thought.

Surely his Qi helped a bit too, but it was most likely the spiritual sense that helped him more than anything.

"Did you not know?" Qin Shan gave him a weird look.

Alex shook his head. "I've had a spiritual sense from the very moment I started making pills, so I was never able to tell the difference," he said.

"Also, I made pills alone most of the time, so it was impossible for me to learn about it from my peers," he said.

"Did you not learn about it from any alchemy books?" he asked.

Alex shook his head again. "Where I learned alchemy, Spiritual sense isn't common at all. When I had spiritual sense, I could count the number of people who also had a spiritual sense on my hands. That is consisting of the entire empire."

"Is that so?" Qin Shan gave him a surprised look. "I didn't know you were from a backwater place."

Alex gave a dry laugh.

"Anyway," Qin Shan continued. "You really gave me quite a surprise today."

"Ooh, that reminds me," Helen said and turned to her son. "Show him, Al."

Alex chuckled and brought out his medal again.

Qin Shan's eyes went wide just as Helen wanted them. "When?" he asked a single-word question.

"Today," Alex said.

"You passed that tough exam?" he asked.

"Yes," Alex said, remembering the test to become a True Heaven Alchemist. It truly was difficult to say the least.

The test wasn't as simple as making a pill with 50% Harmony. They didn't accept that as proof of one having the capability to do it every time.

So, instead, they gave 10 different recipes, and the alchemist had to make 10 Heaven-grade pills.

Fortunately, they did allow 3 failed attempts for the whole thing, which Alex had to use one for a pill that came out to 48% because his Yang flared a bit mid-alchemy.

However, perhaps more frustrating than that was the fact that this time too, the test room had blared out its alarm at him even when he had put both his storage ring and storage bags into a separate box.

Alex was starting to believe that he was inadvertently using his body's Qi, which could activate everything, to activate that formation.

But then, he couldn't think of an answer as to why all the other formations didn't work for him just being there. Alex shook his head and forgot about that.

Qin Shan gave some congratulations and wholeheartedly welcomed him to the sect as a guest elder.

According to him, there was no saint-rank Alchemist in this city, so Alex was one of the three greatest alchemists of this city. If people there were to find out, surely that would cause a roar throughout the empire.

A 24-year-old True Heaven alchemist. That wasn't something you heard every day.

"You mentioned you wanted to try your hands on talismans right?" Qin Shan asked. "When do you want to start?"

Alex thought for a bit as to what he had coming up next. There was nothing.

The only urgent thing he could think of was his hand, but that too started seeming useless now. He would do his best to get it back if given the opportunity. However, with no opportunity at the moment, he didn't want to do anything.

At least not yet.

So, thinking about this all, Alex gave an answer to the sect master Qin.

"Right now."

A few minutes later, Qin Shan walked out of the room with a sigh and went up the mountain back to his abode.

Helen had refused to let him teach Alex, saying that she had taught him all this time, and she wanted to continue to do so. At least, the starting part.

Alex watched his mother with a smile as she put on the appearance of a strict teacher as she did every time he was taught something back when he was homeschooled.

This brought forth buried memories and that made him smile.

"As you already know, Talismans are simply a piece of paper with runes drawn on top of it," she started teaching him.

"Each rune does something very specific," Helen said as she brought out a blank talisman paper.

"This rune," she said as she drew on the top left corner of the paper, "it is a rune that will create heat."

She poured in some Qi into the rune and soon Alex could feel mild heat coming from the paper.

He was quite surprised to see that a talisman actually worked with most of the paper empty. He hadn't seen such a talisman in his life, so he was surprised, to say the least.

"Next, when I draw this rune for this rune," she said as she drew another rune. "It will create more heat. This new rune is the rune for 'Growth' by the way."

Alex nodded as he listened intently to his mother's explanation.

He watched her draw the two squiggly lines that were runes and then saw her draw a single straight line between the two runes.

"We call this line a Rune Bridge. It connects the 'Heat' rune to the 'Grow' rune," she said. "When connected the 'Grow' rune will aid the 'Heat' rune and help the heat grow."

"So, when I do this..." Helen said as she poured in her Qi into the talisman. Alex waited a moment, and a second later he could start feeling intense heat radiating from the talisman.

In the next second, the paper caught fire and burned off.

"...that happens," Helen said as the final remains of the talisman papers were burnt away.

"Isn't that wasteful?" Alex asked seeing her so easily destroy her creation.

"No," she said. "I'm not stupid enough to use good papers and ink when teaching. Most of these papers are very low grade that I use to practice new runes on before trying it in my actual good quality paper with my good quality ink."

"Oh," Alex said.

"Let's continue," she said and brought out another piece of paper and did the same thing that she did last time.

When the 'Heat' and 'Grow' runes were connected, she stopped and looked at Alex.

"When this talisman is used, it produces too much heat for the talisman to sustain. What do you think we can do?" Helen asked.

She knew Alex didn't know the first thing about runes, yet she still asked.

Alex thought for a moment and asked a question instead. "What's our purpose with the heat? Are we trying to use it or just make sure the paper doesn't burn?" he asked.

"Good question," Helen said. "Hmm... okay, what if we don't want the paper to burn?"

Alex thought for a moment and answered, "is there a rune for cooling?" he asked.

"There is," Helen said. "But that affects the heat from the talisman which we don't want to lower. What else can you think of?"

Alex thought for a moment. He could think of a few other ways.

Chapter 685: Talisman Learning

"Fortify the paper?" Alex asked.

"Yes, that works," Helen said. "What else?"

"Is there a rune for making something resistant to fire?" he asked.

"There is," Helen said with a smile. "But it's better if you make it resistant to heat itself. What else?"

"Make the heat release outwards faster?" he said.

"Be careful," Helen said. "Too fast and you'll make the talisman explode."

'Oh,' Alex thought in his head. He then thought for a bit longer as he remembered all the talismans he had seen being used.

However, he couldn't think of anything specific aside from those few ways. He was too uneducated about talismans.

Helen saw right through him. "Okay, what if you were to make it so that the heat releases a distance away from the talisman itself?" she asked.

"Oh, you can do that?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "Have you seen talismans that make barriers? The barriers are never next to the talisman itself. That's because they make it so that the barrier appears some distance away from where the talisman is."

While Alex nodded as he understood the reasoning, Helen drew another rune that looked like 2 runes put together.

"If your talisman has numerical information, you need to use compound runes to give all the numbers," she said. "I will teach you the numbers later, but for now, this number is saying 1 and it's compounded with the distance unit 'Chi', which is about 33 centimeters long."

"So, when I connect this distance with 'Heat'," Helen said as she drew the Rune Bridge.

"This happens."

The moment Helen put Qi into the talisman, Alex felt something warm appear around her hand. There was no high heat like before that could burn the paper.

This time, the heat was mellow.

"Is the heat being distributed?" he asked.

"Yes," Helen said. "There's only so much heat you can produce with such a bad paper and ink."

She stopped it and said, "now, can you think of a way to turn this heat into a fire that burns away from the paper?"

Alex thought for a moment. "The heat is already away from the paper, so we should just concentrate it on one point, instead of letting it spread all around."

"Yes," Helen said with a bright smile and quickly drew a rune before connecting it to 'Heat' rune.

Then when she used the talisman again, this time about 30 centimeters above the talisman, Alex saw a bright point of light which soon turned into a tongue of fire.

"It's great right?" Helen said as she excitedly looked at his son. "Look how hot it got just because we made the heat gather at a certain point."

Alex nodded as he looked at the fire. "1823 Celcius. That's quite hot," he said.

Helen gave a surprised look. "You can tell the temperature so accurately?" she asked.

Alex nodded. "It's one of the requirements of being an alchemist. Being able to tell how hot your fire is. A technique of mine helps me be hyper-specific," he said.

"So you now understand how talismans work, right? Just the basic concept at least," She asked.

"Yes," Alex said.

"Now, let's take the lesson a step further as I will teach you how to immediately improve upon this," she said.

Alex smiled as he waited for his mother to continue.

Helen had started his teaching of talisman at a very weird point in the study. Instead of going with theoretical knowledge first and supplementing that with practical usage, she had decided to only show him the practical stuff first and follow that with some explanation.

Alex guessed that would work in the end, but the start felt very weird nonetheless.

Helen quickly drew the same runes on another talisman and flipped it around to show it to him.

"What's wrong here?" she asked.

Alex looked at the runes and didn't see anything wrong with it really. Except for one glaring problem that he knew wasn't a problem because it had worked before.

"You've only drawn the runes on the left half of the talisman," Alex said. "Why did you leave the right half empty?"

"That's because I'm going to draw the same runes again," she said as she drew the runes right in front of him.

"Wait," Alex said. "You made a mistake, mother."

"Oh, did I?" Helen asked with a hidden chuckle in her voice before completing the talisman.

Alex was confused now. "Those runes are wrong, aren't they?" he asked when he saw the right half of the talisman. Every rune she drew on that half was the exact opposite of the other one like q was to p.

Alex stopped when he saw the bigger picture however and his mind nearly reeled in shock.

"You've created symmetry," he said. The right half of the rune was a mirror image of what was on the left half.

"Yes, and that helps us improve align—"

Helen stopped when she saw Alex move forward suddenly and look at the rune closely.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"Symmetry... that's something I've learned about a while ago, but it still surprises me how well it can work," he said.

"Yes, making a symmetrical talisman makes the Alignment improve by nearly half," she said. "If a normal talisman did 50%, adding a simple mirror of it can help it reach 75%," she said.

"And how do these reverse runes work?" he asked. "Do they not do more harm than good?" he asked.

"Okay, that is something very special about runes. You can flip it, move it around, or change the location of the runes themselves. If it is there, it will work," she said.

"There's no logic to what the orientation should be?" Alex asked.

"No," Helen said. "As long as you draw it, it works."

"Oh," Alex said and looked at the paper for a bit before asking. "What if instead of making 2, you made 4?"

"Right, that's where I have a few things to teach you," she said and placed the talisman down.

"There are 3 things that determine how good a talisman is," she said.

"First, is the quality of the paper and ink you will use to draw. The paper needs to be very smooth and as few imperfections as possible."

"The ink needs to be smooth as well, with no floating chunks of the ingredients," she said.

"Second, is the uniformness of your drawing. I'm not just talking about the shapes of the runes, but rather the thickness of the ink you leave behind on the paper."

"Having a properly shaped rune is obvious. Having perfect lines through and through is obvious. These are not things I will need to explain to you."

"What most don't realize is that when they focus on making sure they haven't fumbled on the obvious, they fumble at places that are not obvious."

"Finally, the third thing that helps in improving the alignment of the talisman is the size of your runes," she said.

"The number of runes do not matter. What matters is its size. Since symmetry is so important in the talisman, we usually stay at two opposite pairs of runes," Helen finally finished.

"Oh," Alex said as he tried to comprehend what he just learned.

"Oh right, one thing," She said. "While your runes have to be absolutely perfect to make it work, your Rune Bridge however can be however you want."

"You can curve it, twist it, whatever you want to fit it into your design. Of course, straight ones are the best since it does the same thing and there is little place for error, but you have other options too," she said.

"I see," Alex said.

He couldn't help but think of how different talismans were to formations. When he learned that demons had founded runes while humans founded formations, he had half believed that those two things worked just like each other.

However, now he could see how wrong he was.

As he thought that, a question appeared in his mind.

"What determines the rank?" he asked.

In formations, it was the number of base formations used in the overall formations. If he followed that logic, then there should be a number limit for runes that changed it from one grade to another.

However, given how different they already were, Alex didn't trust his logic.

"Oh, it's the quality of the ink," Helen said, half embarrassed that it had taken her this long to tell him that which she should have explained from the beginning.

"Quality of ink?" he asked.

"Yes, depending on the ingredients used for the ink, your talisman can do some tasks better than others. Some ink are better for heat, some are better for keeping records, some are better for sending information, etc," Helen said.

"The inks that are made from common rank ingredients make Common rank Talisman. Inks made from True rank ingredients make True rank talisman, and so on," she said.

"Wait, what about the runes? Is there anything stopping me from making the same design in all ranks?" he asked.

"Nope, nothing is stopping you," she said. "Well, nothing aside from finding ingredients for the ink that is... and maybe your mental strength as higher rank inks use up a lot more mental strength than you can imagine."

'They really are very different,' he thought.

"I think you should read this book to learn a lot more," Helen said as she brought out a book called 'Ink, Paper, and Runes - A special guide to Talisman.

Alex casually flipped through the book and saw a mind-numbing amount of information in there.

He nodded with a smile. "I will learn this later tonight," he said.

"Good," Helen said. "For now, let's see you try your hand at making a talisman."

Chapter 686: Three Heaven

The first few of Alex's attempts were absolutely botched, to say the least.

For a man who hadn't held a pen in almost 4 years, holding a brush and having made it to make intrinsic design was absolutely undoable.

That being true only for the first few times at least.

His hands were sturdy like a surgeon and he could hold his brush as steadily as well. But being steady came at the cost of flexibility one was required to move their wrists dynamically as per the rune's demand.

After fumbling so bad the first 2 times where the result couldn't even be called a talisman and then the next 2 times which both resulted in less than 10% alignment, Alex finally succeeded on his 5th attempt with 14%.

Alex felt a little disappointed that he took nearly an hour to draw this simple rune that his mother drew as if she were writing a grocery list.

Still, he was at least happy to have done it.

Helen made no remark on how extraordinary this feat was. For someone who had just learned the first thing about talisman an hour ago, being able to successfully create a talisman that was acceptable by the masses was incredible.

But, Helen was used to her son doing remarkable stuff. So, this thing which would have taken even the best disciples at least a day to do, or at least 3 for normal ones, didn't surprise her very much.

As such, Alex was once again blissfully unaware of how great his speed was.

He made about 5 more of the same talisman, each with above 15% alignment. One even reached 20% towards the end, making Helen give out a short gasp.

After Alex finished making the talisman, a question came to him that he hadn't thought of asking before.

"What rank of talisman am I making?" he asked.

"True rank of course," his mother said.

Alex gave a little surprised look. "I'm already nearing True-Earth rank as a Talisman maker?" he asked suspiciously.

"Not exactly," Helen said. "Talisman creating is more than just following a set design. It's about creativity and ingenuity. You or your client will have a problem they want to solve."

"While most of the time you can follow a design someone already made, other times you will have to formulate a design based on the problem."

"Which can take a very long time," Helen said. "There was this one time a man needed a talisman that could keep cold away from him without the talisman releasing any heat."

"I was honestly stumped for a few hours since that felt impossible. The only thing I could think of was creating a barrier that kept out air, but the man needed to breathe."

"So, I had to create a talisman that not only kept out air but released some in as well. In a sense, I had to make a storage talisman mixed with a barrier," Helen said.

"There are ways to create spaces inside talisman?" Alex asked with surprise.

"Of course. You can use runes for almost anything," Helen said. "But don't expect them to keep anything of yours in it."

"It could barely even hold much air at all in the end. Fortunately, the man had a high enough cultivation base that he didn't need much," Helen said.

"Still," Alex said. "Since I might not really get into the creative sides of runes, I should probably just glee at the fact that I'm getting close to the True Earth realm."

"If I was practicing alchemy like this, without any aid of techniques, it would've probably taken much longer for me," he said.

"I don't doubt that," Helen said.

"Perhaps Alchemy and Artifacts are the only two professions where you have to do everything by yourself," Helen said.

"What do you mean?" Alex gave a confused look.

"Look, for talismans, you already have the ink prepared for you, even though that is the most important part of the talisman."

"For formations from what I hear, you already have a well-shaped and refined piece of metal for yourself to carve on."

"For the rest of the two? You have to do it all by yourself," Helen said. "Maybe that is a reason why Talisman and Formations are so much easier to learn and do than Alchemy and Artifacts."

"What about the other 3?" Alex asked. "Music, Spirit foods, and painting."

"Well, a musician doesn't have to make her own flutes and zithers. A spirit food chef needs only worry about the taste, making its nutrients a second thought, and finally, painting needs talent and practice, but similar to the talisman, the paint and paper are already handed."

"So, they could never measure up to the difficulty of Artifacts and Alchemy," Helen said.

Alex fell into thought. "Who makes the inks then?" he asked.

"There are a certain group of talisman makers that are focused on just that," Helen said. "You are taught and can learn the basics of ink making, but it is always better to have an expert make it for you."

"I see," Alex said as he stared at the ground, thinking to himself.

'Formations need artifacts, artifacts need formations, alchemy needs artifacts and formations, maybe you can carve runes on artifacts too,' Alex thought to himself. 'It's all so interconnected.'

"Alright, go back and read the book for now. Try to remember as many runes as you can, and we can continue from there," she said.

"Okay," Alex nodded and left, leaving Pearl behind with his mother to keep her company. She had really come to take a liking to the little cat and he liked that.

Over the course of the entire night, Alex remembered every single rune in that book. He also remembered everything else that was written on it.

That book wasn't a technique book at all, so Alex had to deal with the information over the course of the next couple of days.

After all, remembering something wasn't the same as knowing it. It wouldn't be hard, but it wouldn't be easy either.

Slowly, under Helen's teaching and the occasional sect master's guidance, Alex managed to reach 40% on his talisman by the end of the month.

And that was despite the fact that he also practiced Alchemy quite a lot and a bit of formation on the side.

Alex was certain that he wouldn't reach for very soon due to the limitation of the ink and the brush he held.

What he was certain was that he would surely cross True Heaven rank at the very least.

Now, all he had to worry about was making sure his creativity kept up with his talent.

'I guess I can just rely on what others have done before me and not really worry about how I would solve some problems,' Alex thought to himself.

Alex knew that right now his main focus needed to be on alchemy. Because of that, he had to begin downgrading some of the True pill recipes he had to Common pills in preparation for the pill to heal his hand.

Still, he gave some equal time to both talismans and formations, while spending the majority on alchemy.

In one month, he felt he had made a lot of advancement in both of them and could consistently create Heaven-grade talismans and formations.

So, no longer hesitating, Alex went to the Talisman guild during the second month and took an exam.

He passed with flying colors as he made every single talisman with more than 55% Alignment.

Half a month later, Alex went to the formations guild as well and became a True Heaven formation master.

Fortunately, not many people learned of this fact. And the few that did keep their mouth shut.

If anyone learned that a single young man of age less than 25 had not only learned 3 of the main professions, but was also good enough to reach True Heaven rank on all 3 of them, the city would certainly be shocked, and even figures from the capital would come to see him.

Fortunately, those that did know about it really wanted to keep him for their own guilds, and as such, no information was spread.

There was also another event that took place during the 2 months that was enough to distract the city's attention enough so that no one took notice of Alex's improvement.

After all, it wasn't always that the empire gained a new True Immortal rank Talisman maker.

Qin Shan's nose was massive with pride and glee as he watched his disciple be taken as one of the best talisman makers out there.

Even Tian Ye would barely be her match now that she had the spiritual sense to aid her.

The only thing that could possibly hold her back now were things that were out of her hands such as Ink, paper, and brush.

The quality of these things wasn't something Helen could simply change herself. Buying better ones cost a lot sometimes, so you had to make do with cost-effective stuff.

Since you had to buy paper and ink yourself, most talisman creators were only so eager to spend so much on their craft.

Fortunately, paying for your own stuff meant that, unlike the alchemy guild, you didn't have to pay some fee for screwing up your talisman.

Alex didn't know how he felt about that for in his mind the Alchemy guild's system was much better.

As such, 3 months passed by in flash. Alex had learned a lot during this time and he found every second he spent learning Alchemy or the other 2 professions was very helpful.

However, that also meant that he had neglected his own cultivation quite a bit. He needed to think of a way to get that back on track as well.

Chapter 687: Help

Alex was out in one of the uninhabited mountains of the Flowing Brush with his mother.

They had flown here because his mother insisted that she wanted to find some ingredients for some ink. Alex decided to use this opportunity to train his mother in some techniques.

Over the last month, he had scoured the depths of his mind to remember the techniques he had read back when he first got them. He had noted down most that he remembered.

While he couldn't note down the one in the Human language since he wouldn't be able to translate it for his mother, he did note down the other ones.

Most importantly, he noted down 3 particular techniques.

Immortal Concealment technique, Veiled light technique, and finally, Flickering Shadow technique.

He was a little sad that he didn't get to note down Heaven's Impact as that would have perhaps been the best of them all, but this would have to do as well.

Aside from that, he had also noted down the few defensive techniques he knew. As for offensive techniques, Alex couldn't think of many he had that his mother could use.

Most of his elemental techniques were, to put it mildly, bad. Some of them like his metal techniques and yang palm technique took advantage of his Supreme Spiritual roots which his mother did not have and could likely never have.

Unless he learned how to acquire them by himself.

He had no water technique. His fire technique was something he learned before he had established his spiritual sense, and his wood technique was a sword technique, which his mother likely couldn't use.

Alex thought it was better to give her whatever sect master Qin had in mind for her.

For now, he decided to focus on defense and evasion.

Alex looked at his mother who picked a ripe blackberry from the vine and put it in a jar of sorts.

"Come behind me," he said. As soon as she heard that, it took her 2 seconds to get everything in order and teleport right behind him where his shadow lay.

"You're getting better," Alex said. "But you should be able to do even more so."

"I know," Helen said dejectedly. "But my meridians aren't wide enough to send my Qi through it."

Alex sighed. Since his mother wasn't a fighter or dealt with something that required constant pouring of Qi like he had to with Alchemy, she hadn't used her meridians anytime aside from cultivation.

So, they weren't flexible enough to let her move her Qi.

'I could stress her meridians, but I don't have any way to heal them afterward,' he thought. They weren't tough like his own so if he by some chance ruptured her meridian, he wouldn't be able to heal her back as easily.

'I need a lot of knowledge about the human body, especially cultivator before I dare do anything risky with my mother,' he thought.

Then he thought of something else. 'Can I find the Divine Devil's fruit somewhere?' he wondered.

If he found that, he could easily get his mother to go through Mortal Cleansing, in which case her meridians would naturally become more flexible and her Qi would flow easily.

"I'll do something about that soon," He told his mother.

It required his mother to go through 3 different mountains before she found what she was looking for. During this time, he helped her train a lot.

Not just him, even Pearl helped her a lot. Alex let her know that she was ready for a breakthrough after such long training.

Alex wondered if he himself was. He knew he could easily breakthrough, but was 3 months of doing nothing helpful in any way?

At that very moment, he decided to go back to the Eastern mountain ranges sometime again to improve himself.

'I should go there within the next month, I've put off my training for far too long,' he said to himself.

Once the mother-son duo was done with their task, they returned back to the sect.

At that time, they found the sect master waiting for them outside their home.

"Master, why are you here?" she asked. "Do you need something?"

"Yes, your son," he said and turned to Alex. "Junior Yu, do you have any antidote pills?"

He had started calling Alex, Yu Ming as per his request, so that others didn't accidentally know of his name and connect that with him being a player.

While players were already largely integrated into the society, Alex still felt some paranoia about the fact. He didn't want people meddling in his business and trying to hurt him or kidnap him to use him.

His body was way too unique to go around letting everyone know of his origins.

What he feared most perhaps was someone picking his brain like Zexi did, only this time successfully. The amount of information they could learn that would destroy him and the calm 5th continent was staggering.

Alex nodded to the Sect master's question and asked, "is it for someone in the True realm?"

"No, common," the old man said.

"I see," Alex said as he quickly brought one out. "What happened?"

"Sigh, there is some poison grass growing on the mountains now. Some of the disciples get scratched by it and end up becoming poisoned from time to time," he said.

"I see," Alex said. "Still I didn't expect you to come personally for something like that."

"I wouldn't," the sect master said. "But the other elders couldn't find you, so I came down looking myself. I didn't know you had gone out."

"Yes, mother needed something," he said. "Actually, should you be wasting time on this idle conversation?"

"Right, I'll see you later," the old man said and flew off.

Alex checked his storage bag and realized he was a little low on antidotes. He also had a duty to the sect as a guest elder.

So, he decided to fulfill it by making a bunch of antidotes and healing pills for both Common realm and True realm cultivators.

He looked to the sky and realized that it was only mid-afternoon.

'Sigh, I don't have any ingredients on me for antidotes and healing pills,' he thought to himself.

"Mother, I will go to the city and make some pills for the sect. I'll see you later," Alex said and went away.

Alex arrived at the Alchemy guild some 15 minutes later. The moment he entered, the receptionists that were working bowed towards him in greeting.

They were well aware of the fact that he was one of the 3 greatest alchemists in the entire city.

Alex brought out a talisman he himself had made and note down a bunch of ingredients and amounts.

"Can you guys help me get these? Are there any that aren't in stock?" he asked.

The receptionist girl who Alex talked to looked over the ingredients with what they had and answered, "We are a little short on Bitter Thorns, we have about 10 of them. Aside from that, everything else is in stock."

"Can you help me buy them all? Use the spirit stones that are under my name," Alex said.

"Yes, Alchemist Yu," the girl said and did something with the formation in front of her, and soon he could see the storage bag in front of the receptionist fill up.

The ingredients were being transferred. Once it was done, she handed the storage bag to him and Alex checked.

Everything was in order.

"Thank you," he said and turned to leave.

"Alchemist Yu, wait," the receptionist cried out, stopping him mid-walk.

Alex turned around with a confused look. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"There's someone here to meet you," she said.

"Meet me?" Alex asked.

"Well, not exactly you, but a True Heaven alchemist. Since you are the only one here, I can only have you meet them," she said.

"I see," Alex nodded. "Who wants to see True Heaven alchemists?"

The girl pointed her finger to two figures that sat on the bench in the corner of the guild.

Alex followed the finger and was surprised to learn that he recognized both of them.

He walked off and quickly arrived in front of them.

"May I ask what sister Liang and sister Han want from this lowly alchemist?" Alex asked.

The two girls that were sitting inconspicuously, turned their heads to look at him. When they saw his badge, their eyes shined.

"We need your help."

Chapter 688: Willow's Bark

Liang Qiu, the best disciple of the Heaven's Peak school, wore the famous Black and Red robes of her school.

She had pitch-black hair as well as a tall and slender body. Her fair complexion made her quite desirable to most of her peers of the opposite gender.

However, it was likely that no one dared get close to her with how above everyone she was.

3 years ago, or 3 months ago from Alex's perspective, she had been at around the 4th True King realm.

Right now, Alex could sense something close to the 9th Realm of True King realm.

It seemed she had stopped at the doorstep of the True Emperor realm. Alex sighed to himself. He wondered if he could ever manage to catch up to her.

Han Daiyu seemed equally strong as well. She was a big muscular girl with brown, half-sleeved, cultivator robes that showed her well-defined physical body that she certainly trained in the sun for a long time to get.

Alex could see the dark tan on her face, surrounded by light-brown hair.

Alex had only seen her with her hammer back in the demon realm where she had helped Tian Ye with the experiment to get the House of the Undying open. So, he found her a little unusual when she wasn't holding one.

Her cultivation base itself was around the 7th realm of True King, but Alex knew of the Han family's physique and he wouldn't doubt that she could manage to bring out attacks close to the same level as Liang Qiu's.

The two girls stood up when they saw Alex. Liang Qiu was a step faster than Han Daiyu.

"Are you really a True Heaven alchemist?" Han Daiyu said before even giving out a greeting.

Alex saw Liang Qiu give a stern side-eye to Han Daiyu who dismissed it slightly with a shrug.

Alex tried not to laugh as he said, "Yes, I am. Please don't let my age confuse you regarding that."

"I'm sorry about her. She didn't mean anything disrespectful," Liang Qiu tried to speak up for Han Daiyu.

"It's alright. I can see why sister Han is concerned," Alex said. "So, you said you needed my help, sister Liang. May I ask what it is about?"

"We need a pill," Liang Qiu said.

Alex gave a confused look. "I don't see why you needed to meet me for that," he said. "Please don't get me wrong, I'm happy to have finally met you two after hearing so much about you, but you could have simply left a mission for us. I'm sure any of the 3 of us would have gotten to it when we checked upon it."

"No!" Liang Qiu immediately shouted. "We do need a pill, but first we need its ingredients too."

"Oh," Alex said. "Is it not available in the guild?"

She shook her head.

"Not even in the entire empire?" he asked suspiciously.

The girls still shook their heads.

"Hmm," Alex mused to himself. "May I then know why you are exactly here?"

"We have a recipe for a pill that I would want to be made for me. But I can't gather all the ingredients."

"It is just one ingredient, but I can't find records of it anywhere, let alone knowing what it looks like. I've been to many people and places, but none of them have been any help," she said.

"So, you came here hoping that one of us would be helpful?" he asked.

Liang Qiu nodded. Han Daiyu didn't do or say anything. She let Liang Qiu do all the grunt work while she simply stood watching the two of them talk.

"May I know what the ingredient is?" he asked.

"It's something called 'Corrosive Willow's bark'," she said thoughtfully.

"Corrosive Willow? I see. You couldn't find its bark in the market huh?" Alex asked.

The girls shook their heads. However, even as they did, Liang Qiu gave him a weird look.

"Do you know the tree?" she asked confusedly.

"Yes," Alex said before thinking for a moment. He did know of the tree, but not about it.

Meaning that he had seen the tree, but had read nothing about its properties or even learned what the ingredients could be used for.

Han Daiyu's eyes went a little wide when she heard a positive response. "You know of the tree? Please don't lie, sir alchemist. It's fine if you don't know about it."

Alex gave a smile. "I can promise you, I know of the tree. In fact, I know the general area of where it is too," he said.

The girls' faces were a sight to see. "You really know of the tree? Please don't lie, this is a very important pill for us," they said.

"I can promise you on my pride as an alchemist, I do know of the tree and where it is," Alex said.

"Oh, where is it?" the girls asked.

"The Poison Swamp," Alex said.

"The Poison Swamp?" the two girl's faces drained a little in color when they heard that.

"Please excuse us for a second," Liang Qiu said and took Han Daiyu to the corner to speak with her.

Meanwhile, Alex couldn't help but think to himself, 'should I just move forward with my plan to go train and go to the poison swamp then? That's not a bad training area.'

'At the same time, I should be able to get their Corrosive Willow bark as well,' he thought to himself. 'Sigh, if only I got Blood Spirit Ginseng that way too.'

'Is it safe for me though?' he thought to himself. 'Without Shen Jing to look after me, they may attack me with no one to save me.'

Alex started to hesitate a bit when he thought that.

"Um, sir Alchemist," Liang Qiu spoke to catch her attention.

"You can call me Yu Ming," Alex said with a slight smile.

"Alchemist Yu, would you mind giving us an exact location of where the tree is?" she asked. "We can give something in return, be it spirit stones or something else."

"Uh, I'm sorry," Alex said. "I don't remember the exact location aside from the fact that it was in the Poison swamp," Alex said.

That was true. He had his eyes blindfolded, so as he went around the massive swamp, he had seen many things in many locations which he couldn't connect to a specific location due to his eyes being shut all the time.

"Um, can you tell us what it looks like then?" she asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "It's a 5-meter-tall tree, with a trunk about this big that grows into 7 different main branches that branch out, even more, to fill the tree with green leaves that..."

Alex trailed off when he saw the look on their faces. Frowns.

"I'm not giving a very good description, am I?" he asked.

"I'm sorry, I can't really visualize it properly," Liang Qiu said. "It's too..."

"Generic," Han Daiyu said from the side.

"I know," Alex said. "I'm afraid I can't help on that part. It is a generic-looking tree. That's how it had managed to hide from everyone, I suppose."

"That... makes sense," Liang Qiu said.

"What do we do now?" Han Daiyu asked from the side in a low voice, but Alex caught her words.

"I don't know," Liang Qiu said from the side.

Alex waited for a bit before saying, "If you don't need me, then I should go back to making—"

"Wait!" Liang Qiu said. "I mean, please wait, Alchemist Yu."

"Yes?" Alex waited.

The girl sighed for a moment before saying, "Would you mind accompanying us to the Poison swamp so that you can help us find the tree?"

Alex didn't answer immediately and stared at the girl for a moment. "What's in it for me?" he asked.

"Um, can't you do it for us?" Han Daiyu said, putting on a cutesy face and voice.

Alex openly chuckled in a non-disrespectful way. "I'm afraid I can't simply leave my job here at the guild without me getting something return, you know," He said.

"No, no. Of course not," Liang Qiu intervened, not before glaring at Hai Daiyu who simply laughed.

"We won't ask you to go with us for free," she said. "We can give you some compensation in return."

"Oh," Alex made an amused look. "What can you give me, sister Liang?"

"Anything that is within my capabilities, I will give it to you," Liang Qiu said with an air of pride.

"Anything?" Alex gave her a sly look that made her reconsider her words. She saw him stare at her and started getting the feeling that she should have phrased her words better.

'Anything? Stupid! What if he asks for you?' she blamed herself, but she didn't let it show on her face.

Alex chuckled. "I do know exactly what I want. In fact, I have two things I want," he said while looking at both of them.

This time, even Han Daiyu got a little uncomfortable.

Liang Qiu frowned a little and was about to speak up when Alex put up his hand.

"My apologies, I was merely having some fun. I really do need two things, however. One is armor, and another one is an artifact for stopping mental attacks. I need both of those of high rank and grades."

"You can get me either of these two things, but I would really appreciate it if you could get both of them to me," he said.

Liang Qiu thought for a moment and said, "Both of those can be arranged, so long as you will come with us to the swamp."

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"Great!" Alex exclaimed when he heard that. "When do we leave?"

"As soon as possible," Han Daiyu said.

"In 3 days," Liang Qiu said after a bit more thought than Daiyu. "We will need to prepare since it won't be just us."

"Oh," Alex said. "More people will come?"

"Yes," Liang Qiu nodded. "Since we are both very valuable to our sects and families, they won't let us go to a place like the Poison Swamp without some assistance, so to speak."

"I understand," Alex said. "I will make sure to get ready for that day then."

"I should be able to have a defensive mental artifact ready for you in the next 3 days. Daiyu here knows more about armors, she will be in charge of that," Liang Qiu said.

Han Daiyu nodded without saying any words. Alex was surprised they were going to help him with both of those items, and with so little thought at that.

"It seems the pill you want to be made is very important," Alex said seriously. "May I ask what sort of pill it is?"

Liang Qiu's face changed a little as she thought for a bit. "I will be very honest, Alchemist Yu. This pill is so important and... unique, that I'm not sure I'm even confident of letting you make it."

"Please do not take offense to that statement. I don't mean it to demerit your ability, it's just that the secrecy of the pill is our top priority right now," Liang Qiu said. "So, we might end up requesting senior Xue instead."

Alex nodded when he heard that. Xue Mufan was perhaps the most popular alchemist in the whole Luminance Empire.

If anyone asked who the best alchemist in the empire was, the names that would pop up were Xue Mufan of the Falling Lotus sect and Zhou Zirong of the Zhou family who made his name through his exceptional use of White Flame.

They were both Saint Earth ranked alchemists, meaning if they were to agree to do this, they could easily reach an amazing harmony.

"That makes me even more intrigued, sister Liang," Alex said. A pill that they had to request the best Alchemist in the empire to make, Alex was dying to learn what it was.

"I'm sorry, but we have to go with someone we know can create the best pills," Liang Qiu said.

Alex nodded since he understood. If the pill was as special as Liang Qiu was making it to be, then he too would suggest not wasting time on just about anyone and go straight to someone you know for sure can do it.

However, that didn't mean he was letting go of the chance to learn about said pill.

Alex thought for a moment and waved his hand to bring out two pill bottles. The two of them gave a confused look to Alex who placed one of the bottles each onto their hands.

"What is this?" Liang Qiu asked with a confused look.

"Are you trying to bribe us, Alchemist Yu?" Han Daiyu said with a gleeful smile from the side.

Alex shook his head. "I expect you to not eat these pills and return them to me... uh, where are we meeting to leave?" he asked.

"Outside our sect's gate. We will fly from there," Liang Qiu said.

"Yes, when I meet you two there, I expect you to return those pills to me," he said.

"Hmph!" Han Daiyu said. "Then why give it to us?"

Liang Qiu looked at him with an inquisitive look as well.

"Consider this my audition, a test if you will, so that I may prove that I am a good choice to make the pill for you," he said. "You won't have to go far away to meet Saint Alchemists who may not have the time to make True pills."

"You wish to sway our thoughts with these pills?" Liang Qiu asked with a smile.

"Yes," Alex answered. Then, he bowed to the two girls. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some pills to make. I shall see the both of you in the morning in 3 days."

"Thank you for your assistance, Alchemist Yu," Liang Qiu said.

"Thank you," Han Daiyu followed.

Alex gave a warm smile and a wave of his hand as he walked over to the mission board to complete some missions while he was there.

He took a few missions at once, one of the advantages of having the rank he did, and went to the alchemy room.

It wasn't until around evening that he finally left the room and handed all the pills that he made for the missions.

Then, he handed all the extra pills he made from the ingredients he got in those missions over to them as well to sell for him.

Alex knew he had close to 10 thousand True Spirit stones in the guild right now, but he never took them out. It was better to just use them to buy ingredients and so forth.

Also, with his money with the guild, if there was ever a Blood Spirit Ginseng on the market, the receptionists in the guild had his full authority to buy it at whatever the cost was.

Once Alex was done with his tasks in the guild, he went back to the sect and went directly to his room to make the pills.

Unfortunately, after his house was improved upon and more formations were added, there was also a formation to keep out spiritual sense. These formations only worked up to a certain range, but Saint realm cultivators were mostly unable to pierce them, so his mother had no hope of seeing him inside his room to check if he was back or not.

Fortunately, however, Pearl was with his mother, so he could let her know that he was back since their bond was stronger than this measly formation.

So, without any worry, he started making the pills that he was so desperate to make.

It took Alex nearly 2 days to finish all the ingredients he had bought with about 3 different breaks in between to cool off his head and go visit his mother.

In those 2 days, he made 7 different types of Healing pills, each with different strength and focusing on a different part of the body, as well as 5 different types of antidotes that worked on different types of poison, with many inter lapping with each other.

In total, he made exactly 193 pills, not bothering to separate any of the pills into two weaker pills using his splitting technique. However, he didn't give it his all for all of the pills so as to maintain his mental strength throughout the day, so only about 150 of those pills came out at Heaven grade with the highest being at 62%.

The lowest, however, didn't go below 43% either. So, all in all, this was an excellent acquirement for the sect.

Qin Shan's shock was a sight to see when Alex brought out all of those pills. It wasn't the number that shocked him of course, as he was used to having to buy pills in bulk for the sect.

No, it was the quality of those pills.

He gave a rueful smile to Alex as he said, "Junior Yu, I'm afraid the sect doesn't have enough extra budget to buy all of those pills at once."

"Oh, how much do you think these will cost?" Alex asked nonchalantly.

Qin Shan's eyes went to the pills while the rueful smile never left his face. " 24 thousand True Spirit stones for the pills alone, and likely 30 thousand if we add the cost of the ingredients too."

Alex smiled. "Close, the ingredients cost about 7 thousand, but I got them in 5 thousand since I bought in bulk and because of my rank."

"As for the pills, yes it will cost around 25 thousand, but I won't ask you to pay that."

"Pay me the 5 thousand for the ingredients and whatever extra you can manage for the pills. Consider the rest of it as me paying interest on the debt you have put me under for taking care of my mother all these years," he said.

Qin Shan's heart skipped a beat when he heard that. The thought of acquiring such impressive pills for such low cost was him coming upon a sizable fortune.

However, he didn't like the feeling of ripping off Alex's hard work as he too was a professional just like him.

"Say what, I don't have the money right now, so I will take these pills for now and pay for them later," he said.

"You don't have to do that. I really mean it when I say I don't need much," he protested.

"No, I would have a guilty conscience if I did that," Qin Shan said sternly.

Alex had to give up in the end. "Uh... fine," he said. "You can give the money to my mother."

After getting a nod from the sect master, Alex went to his mother and told her what he was planning to do for the next couple of days.

"What?" his mother freaked out a little when she heard his destination. "The Poison swamp? That's full of poison. No!"

"It's fine, mother. Don't you remember me telling you that I had been there for an entire year before? Poison doesn't affect me at all," he said.

"But still..." Helen tried to protest but Alex cut her off.

"Don't worry mother. I will be very careful. Besides, it is likely that strong figures from both Heaven's Peak school and the Han Family will go with us as well," he said.

"Sigh, if that is true then sure," she said. "But you must take good care of yourself. If something bad happens, you save yourself first and leave."

"I promise, mother," Alex said. After that, he stayed with his mother for a little longer before returning back to his room where he cultivated with Pearl for the entire night in preparation for tomorrow morning.

Once morning came, he went back to his mother and left Pearl there. Since he would be amidst unfamiliar faces, he didn't want to reveal the uniqueness that was Pearl.

"Take care, son," Helen said.

"See you later," Alex said and left the sect early.

He took out the boat artifact from his storage bag and flew off.

The Heaven's Peak school lay in the mountain ranges on the northeastern side of the Dawnspring city. It was further away from the city than the Flowing Brush sect was.

It took Alex a little longer to reach the sect to him having to take a detour around the city due to flight prohibition, but he still managed to get there before anybody.

He put away his boat and looked at the majestic gates in front of him.

"So this is the Heaven's Peak school, huh?"

Chapter 690: Meeting Big Names

Alex looked at the gate and the subsequent mountains that were full of trees, houses, and all sorts of colors.

He could see different buildings, all of the different shapes, and sizes, as well as people walking amongst them.

Even though it was early morning, he could see disciples of the Heaven's Peak school walk in and out of the sect in their black and red cultivator's robe.

There were also a few people wearing non-sect clothes that also came for their own business.

Alex walked up to a tree that grew next to the cliff and sat next to it on the grass. He looked to his left and could see the city down below quite far away.

The guards, who were likely disciples of the sect on duty, gave his curious glances, wondering who he was.

"Little brother, do you need anything?" they asked him.

"No, I'm just waiting for someone," he said.

"Someone from the sect?" they asked him.

"Yes," Alex answered, and they left him alone. Still, they kept an eye just in case he was up to something.

Alex, meanwhile, simply closed his eyes and sat, thinking about the different things he had to do up next.

He absentmindedly poured his Qi into his storage ring, which devoured it like always without showing any sign of getting larger.

He could tell there was more space inside, way more than the 20 square meters he had at the moment.

Unfortunately, it didn't seem like it was going to improve, so Alex was stuck with th 20 square meters of space. That was by no means a small space, but that was something he could easily get with 4 better storage bags.

'Well, it's not like I need any more. I can just keep the important items here,' he thought to himself.

He then thought about everything else he had to do next. For his arm alone, he needed to go be a Lightsworn, even though it didn't sound hopeful.

It was almost guaranteed that the Shen Girl wouldn't be able to help him, but he still wanted to try with her as well.

If nothing else worked, he would go around scouring the empire in search of the ginseng. Maybe even exchange it for something else with the last person that had bought it.

Other than that, he needed to find a way back to the Crimson Empire and help his own master and martial uncle to get their limbs back.

Alex sighed at the difficulty of everything that he needed to do.

Just then, he heard a commotion from upfront and he looked up to see the guards parting ways for someone, while the people outside also backed off with looks of shock on their faces.

Immediately, everyone started bowing in front of them. Some of the were a little slow to realize what was happening, but once they saw someone bow, the rest of them did as well.

Alex got up to his feet, clearly curious as to who was coming out, and felt a wave of spiritual sense pass through him.

Then, he saw Liang Qiu walk out of the gate and turned directly toward him. She put on a warm smile and started walking.

Alex felt a little shocked when he saw everyone bowing toward her, but when he saw the people, he saw that their eyes weren't focused on her at all.

Instead, it was focused on someone that slowly walked out from the gate after Liang Qiu.

Alex saw a man, who seemed to be in his mid-30s, softly nod towards everyone, beckoning them to stand up.

He was tall, perfectly handsome with clean-shaven face, and black hair that fell to his shoulders perfectly straight.

Not a single strand of hair looked out of sight, and Alex almost thought he would get cut from the hair itself.

Before Liang Qiu could even say anything, she saw him staring at the man's hair and immediately stood in front of him to block his vision.

"Don't look so intently. My master uses his spear Qi to cut his hair and thus his intent is always around him," she said.

"Sorry?" Alex asked, a little confused.

"You will cut spirit if you're not careful. My master's spear intent is very strong," she said.

"Your master?"

A name floated to Alex's head. Shangguan Quan.

When the man slowly walked up to him, Alex immediately fell into a bow. "Greetings senior," he said.

Shangguan Quan stopped right next to his disciple and looked at Alex. "Little brother must be the new True Heaven Alchemist of the Alchemy Guild," the man said.

"Yes, senior," Alex said, clearly surprised that arguably the strongest person in the Heaven's Peak school was talking with him.

Alex didn't know the internal structure of the sect, but he knew that Shangguan Quan was the 1st elder of the sect and the master of Liang Qiu, which may have been the reason for him being the first elder in the first place.

'Why is he here?' Alex wondered to himself, unable to immediately come up with an explanation of how surprised he was from seeing the man.

The crowd around them started soft murmurs of shock, surprise, and confusion. Everyone asked each other who Alex was, but not many knew him to begin with, so the chances of anyone recognizing him were impossible.

Still, some of them had caught the words 'True Heaven Alchemist' and connected that with the news from the guild to realize what was happening.

Shangguan Quan seemed to not mind the crowd at all and instead said, "little brother looks quite young for a True Heaven Alchemist. May I know what your age is?" he asked.

Alex frowned internally a little and decided to add a few numbers to his age. He was about to answer when he saw the man's smile slouch a little as his eyes wandered towards the right before his whole head turned back.

Alex followed his gaze and saw a boat that was capable of holding about 10 different people comfortably as well as having two different rooms on the inside.

As the boat got closer, Alex could see the deep brown color of the boat somehow glow brightly.

At the front of the hull, there was a word written in giant white letters.

HAN

When the boat came next to them, it hovered next to the cliff, but nobody got off it.

Instead, a burly man with arms as big as Alex's torso looked towards them and shouted, "Hey brother Quan, little girl, come on up. We should be leaving already."

Shangguan Quan didn't hide the frown on his face when he said, "You're the one who is damn late." There was no more of his earlier air of elegance.

The other man, however, took no offense to the statement and just laughed. He watched the man gesture for them to get on while Han Daiyu also waved for them from behind.

Liang Qiu was the first to move as she turned towards Alex and said, "Alchemist Yu, let us get aboard the ship."

Alex nodded softly and walked behind her. He slowly floated and landed on the ship where he got a confused look from the burly man.

"Uncle, he's Alchemist Yu!" Han Daiyu quickly said from the side, and the man's face immediately widened to a grin that looked kind of unnatural to Alex.

"Greetings, Alchemist Yu. I am Han Hongqi, this little lass's uncle," the burly man said.

'Han Hongqi... another familiar name,' Alex thought.

"Greetings senior Han," Alex bowed to greet the man.

Han Hongqi was the 3rd son of the Han Family patriarch, and one of the strongest in that family. He was a Saint realm cultivator, just like Shangguan Quan, and a very well-known person in the entire empire.

Alex was already surprised to see Shangguan Quan, but now he saw Han Hongqi as well.

Alex had expected to see Saint Realm cultivators, but not these two. They were some of the strongest figures in the empire, only second to the likes of patriarch and sect leaders of the various major sects and clans, as well as the hidden figures like Shen Jing.

Finally, Shangguan Quan also got onto the ship and glared at Han Hongqi.

Alex wondered if there was some hidden grudge between them, but then he saw Han Hongqi put an arm around Shangguan Quan's shoulders.

"Haha, Brother Quan. You really are a sly fox aren't you?" he said in a voice so loud that even the crowd outside the Heaven's Peak gate could hear them.

Shangguan Quan tried to move away from Hongqi's hand, but it was too strong for him to do so without using a bit of his Qi.

"Goddammit! Couldn't you have come a little later?" he asked with a frown.

"Tsk. Tsk. Tsk." Han Hongqi shook his head while clicking his tongue.

"Alchemist Yu," Liang Qiu said catching his attention and Alex turned around.

He greeted Han Daiyu who was full of smiles this morning.

"Here," Liang Qiu said as she handed something to Alex. Alex looked to see what it was and saw that it was the pill bottle he had given them.

He opened the lid for a split second and saw that the pill was indeed inside.

Next, Han Daiyu also gave him back his pill, which he took with a face full of smile.

He was about to say something when the ship suddenly moved, catching him off guard.

"Hold on to something. I will get us to the poison swamp in no time," Han Hongqi shouted from the side as the ship took off.