

Alchemy 691

Chapter 691: Earrings, Armor, and Shield

It took them all a minute or so to get their composure back from the sudden departure.

Alex sat on the floor of the ship, copying both Han Daiyu and Liang Qiu.

Shangguan Quan was begrudgingly taken away by the ever boisterous Han Hongqi and spoke about something to the side that Alex wasn't curious enough to dare eavesdrop on.

"How have you been, Alchemist Yu?" Liang Qiu asked from the side.

"I've been fine, sister Liang," Alex said, a little surprised that she asked that, but he guessed it was just common courtesy.

He wanted to ask them about the pill but decided not to be the one that brought it forward himself.

"I didn't expect either of those two seniors to come along with us," Alex said, showing clear surprise in his voice. "I would've expected an elder or such of little responsibility to the sect and family to accompany us."

"That just goes to show to you just how important not just we are to them, but also how important this current mission is," Liang Qiu said with a smug smile.

"Right, Alchemist Yu, how did you make that pill?" Han Daiyu suddenly asked. "That pill was amazing, I nearly ate it too, and only stopped because I didn't know what that pill was about."

Alex smiled. "It's amazing, isn't it? It's one of the better products," he said. "Only downside is that it takes me at least 3 weeks to be able to make those pills."

It would've taken him shorter if he had more of those mangoes from the mountains, but he had already eaten all of them. Still, he was starting to notice that he was getting better at the whole thing and as such the overall time was getting lower.

"3 weeks per pill? That's ridiculous, isn't it?" Liang Qiu asked.

"Yes, it's ridiculous," Han Daiyu said from the side as she constantly nodded at Liang Qiu's words.

Alex was confused for a second. Why would that be ridiculous? But then he realized what he had said.

"Ah, my apologies. I meant something else and said something else," he said.

"Oh, what did you mean then?" the girls asked curiously.

"When I said it takes me 3 weeks to make one pill, I wasn't talking about the number of pills I could make, but rather the time it takes me to come up with a way to make one of those pills."

"Once I make a single of those pills, I can make nearly 50 a day since I would have some recipe to follow," Alex said.

The girl's eyes went wide when they heard that.

"Are you serious? You can make so many of those pills in a single day? Will they retain the same level of quality?" they asked.

Alex thought for a bit and answered, "Saying that I can guarantee all of those pills to have such quality would be a lie as there is a chance of randomness to the process."

"However, what I can guarantee is that if I were to make 100 of a single pill that I have taken 3 or more weeks to study, I can make more than 90 of those have the same level of quality as the ones that I handed to you."

"I can also guarantee that even the rest of the pills that don't reach the same quality as the pills I gave you will still be heaven grade," Alex said.

Han Daiyu kept on her surprised look with a hand to her mouth to hide her shock, while Liang Qiu fell into a thoughtful expression.

"If it isn't so rude, may I ask alchemist Yu if you have more of such pills to prove your words?" she asked.

Alex thought for a moment. While what she was asking could certainly be taken as rude, Alex didn't think so.

Instead, he wondered why she even asked that in the first place. 'This is the part where I shock them with my talent so they give me what I want, isn't it?' he thought.

He was extremely cautious about showing off his talents to random individuals, but his curiosity got the better of him.

So, with a simple gesture, he brought out 20 different pill bottles each with a different pill and laid them in front of them.

The girls immediately showed a doubtful expression and without even missing a beat, Liang Qiu brought out a tester before realizing what she had done.

"Um... may I?" she asked half-scared that he might be offended.

"Please, how else are you going to find the legitimacy of my statement?" Alex asked.

The girls nodded and Han Daiyu picked up a pill bottle at random before handing it to Liang Qiu.

Liang Qiu slowly opened the bottle and put the pill directly into the tester.

As the fog on the tester started growing, Alex could feel 2 different sets of spiritual senses settle around them.

'The saints are watching too, huh?' he thought.

The pill easily crossed 50% and slowly went up to stop at around 67%.

Liang Qiu nodded in amazement as such a high level was not something people could possibly make without having a lot of talent.

"Another one!" Han Daiyu said and picked another pill in front of them.

72%.

This was much better than the previous pill.

"Another one!"

69%.

"And another one!"

71%.

They checked about 7 or 8 pills in total before deciding to stop.

Alex smiled and took back all the pills. He looked forward and saw a thoughtful expression on Liang Qiu's face. Even Han Daiyu wasn't her usual self.

Then, something appeared in front of Liang Qiu who looked toward Alex as she said, "Here."

Alex took whatever it was without thinking and saw that it was a pair of earrings.

There was a twisted hook on one side, followed by an amber-like gem hanging on each of the earrings.

Alex looked at the most golden ring and asked, "is this...?"

"Your payment you requested," she said.

Alex finally gave a proper look at the earrings and asked, "Defensive mental artifact?"

Liang Qiu nodded.

"But, I haven't done anything for you yet," Alex said as he handed it back to her. "I can't accept my payment without having done my part."

"No, please take it. I insist," Liang Qiu said.

Alex was about to refuse when he saw something else appear in front of him. This time, there were 2 items.

One was a regular-looking brown-colored armor that was thin enough to wear under his robes, and another one was surprisingly a circular concave shield with nowhere to hold it.

Han Daiyu was the one that brought those two items out, so she started explaining.

"This armor is capable of stopping any attacks under the True Emperor realm. For True Emperor realm, it can stop about 3 attacks before it becomes unusable," she said.

"This shield on the other hand can stop all attacks under the True Emperor realm, but will not stop any attacks over that. What it can do, however, is the ability to create a barrier around you that can stop Omni-directional attacks."

"You may choose whichever one you like," Han Daiyu said.

"Sister Daiyu, as I was explaining to sister Liang, I cannot take it since I haven't provided my services yet. Please let me take—"

"You are being annoying, young man. If they give you something, take it," Han Hongqi arrived next to him and said.

Then he slumped onto the deck and put his arm around Alex. However, to Alex, it felt like a mountain had come down upon him.

He slouched a little before managing to hold on. Han Daiyu gave a cold glare to her uncle who let go of Alex's shoulders and just laughed.

"Anyway, choose one," Han Hongqi said. "If you don't, I will take offense."

Alex sighed. "Very well," he said. "The armor then."

"Oh," Quan gave a surprised exclamation as he sat down on the other side of Alex. "Why not the shield? It can block more than just your chest, you know?"

Alex chuckled a little and lifted his left arm to make them notice it.

"So?" Hongqi asked. "You don't need to have a hand to use that shield."

"Eh? I don't?" Alex looked surprised.

"No," Hongqi pulled the shield to his hand and poured some Qi into it. Then, the shield started hovering in front of him.

"With a single thought, you can move it around you," he said.

Just then, Alex saw something white strike the shield and a brown barrier about double the size of the shield appeared in front of it.

"Or, you can fully activate it... and," as Hongqi poured in more Qi, something flashed in front of them and Hongqi was entirely covered in the shield's barrier, while the shield itself freely moved inside of it.

"If you do take a very strong attack, it's the barrier that will break, not the shield itself, which is different from the other armor which takes the damage physically," Hongqi explained.

"I suggest you take the shield, young man. Something like protecting against True Emperor or higher attacks can be done with talismans too," Shangguan Quan said from the side.

Alex nodded. "Thank you for the information, seniors. Then, if you don't mind, I will take the shield," he said.

"Haha! Good," Hongqi said and passed along the shield.

"Keep the earrings too," Shangguan Quan said and Alex nodded.

Suddenly, Alex was 2 artifacts richer than he had been moments ago.

Chapter 692: Earth Element Ingredients

Seeing how easily they were supporting him with the things he had requested, Alex got increasingly sure that whatever pill recipe they had found, it was for an incredible pill.

However, with both Shangguan Quan and Han Hongqi staying on either side of him, Alex thought it would be rude to bring up that question.

So, instead, he brought up something else to distract them and hopefully make them leave.

"Senior, shouldn't you look after where we are going?" he asked.

"Don't worry, little alchemist. My spiritual sense is at least 3 kilometers wide. I can easily catch any mistakes that can come our way, so have no worry," Han Hongqi said.

"Oh wow," Alex said while secretly wondering what realm of the saint realm one had to be at to have such a vast spiritual sense.

"It's not just him, I'm keeping an eye on things as well. So you don't have to worry about it at all," Shangguan Quan said.

"Not to mention, my spiritual sense is nearly 3.5 Kilometers wide, so I will catch things that come our way before even he does," Quan said.

"Eh? That's a lie. Your spiritual sense is barely as vast as mine," Han Hongqi said.

"Nonsense, I've always had greater spiritual sense than you," Quan said.

Seeing the two of them bickering with each other, Alex got a weird feeling that he was looking at two close friends trying to one-up each other, rather than the enigmatic Saint realm experts.

The two girls sighed and gave an embarrassed smile to Alex who smiled back at them.

After finally concluding that Quan's spiritual sense was in fact wider, but just by a few meters, the two Saint realm experts finally calmed down.

"You two," Shangguan Quan spoke to the girls. Go and prepare, we will reach the Poison Swamp in about 10 minutes.

"I don't have anything—"

"Yes, master," Liang Qiu immediately grabbed Han Daiyu and pulled her away, leaving Alex alone with the two Saint realm experts.

Surprisingly, he didn't feel any form of nervousness or fear at the fact that they were Saint realm experts.

'Perhaps I've been around a bit too many of those lately,' he thought.

The beasts, the Emperor, Shen Jing, Qin Shan, and now these two. He had perhaps been with more Saint realm experts than there were in the Crimson Empire.

'Not to mention lady Ren was an Immortal expert,' he thought to himself.

"Junior Yu, where do you stay these days?" Shangguan Quan asked suddenly.

"Sorry?" Alex gave a little confused look as he took a few minutes to realize what he had been asked. "Ah, I'm in the Flowing Brush sect right now," he replied.

"Flowing Brush sect? I see," Shangguan Quan gave a slightly disappointed look.

"Huh? Wait a minute, that's a talisman sect. How are they helping grow an alchemist like you?" Han Hongqi asked.

"Oh no, I'm not part of that sect. I'm just a guest elder. I have family there, so sect master Qin gave me the guest elder role while I stay there," Alex said truthfully.

"Oh, do you have responsibilities there?" Quan asked.

"Simple ones. I need to make pills for them which they will buy from me," Alex said.

"Oh, they treat you quite well then," Quan said.

"Who taught you how to make pills? You must have a master right?" Hongqi asked.

"I... I did," Alex said with a heavy sigh. "But she's no longer alive."

"My condolences," Quan said.

"Were you part of a sect when you learned from this master of yours?" they asked.

"I was part of a sect," Alex said. "But I left after my master's death."

"Hmm... so is it correct to assume that you do not have any sect or family you belong to at the moment?" Han Hongqi asked.

"That's..." Alex finally realized what it was all about. The two saint realm experts, the smiling faces, the upfront payment, their attitude.

'They want me to join them,' he thought to himself, half surprised and half flattered at what was happening.

"I do not have any organization I belong to aside from the Alchemy guild if you can even call it that," Alex said, immediately bringing an unhidden wide grin to the faces of the two Saint realm experts.

"Have you given any thought to what you want to do in the future? If you haven't, our Heavens' Peak school is willing to take you in as a core disciple of the sect," Shangguan Quan said.

"Core disciple? Pfft," Han Hongqi laughed before looking at Alex and saying, "Young man, our Han family, has a lot of pretty girls. If you want, we can have you marry some of them. You can choose as you want."

"In fact, you can even have a harem if you want. Plus, we will give you the secret technique that can help you cultivate the Earth Demon physique like we all do," Han Hongqi continued.

Shangguan Quan couldn't help but show an aghast expression when he heard that. "Are you willing to go so far? That's your family's physique," he said.

"And this young man will be a member of our family by then. What's wrong with letting him train in that," Han Hongqi said.

Shangguan Quan furiously thought of what he could do to come up with a better deal than that, but he couldn't think of anything.

The only thing he could think of was his disciple. If she agreed to marry him, he could possibly keep him, but that felt like he was going too far.

"I'm sorry, senior," Alex replied to the both of them. "I do not plan on joining any clan or family at the moment. Certainly not marry for sure."

"Come on, there must be something you want right? Something we can help you with or give to you in exchange for you joining our family," Han Hongqi said.

Alex thought for a moment. "I don't know about joining completely, but there is something you can do to have me join your sect and family for 10 to 15 years," Alex said.

Han Hongqi frowned a little. There was no point in keeping Alex for just 15 years if after spending their resources on him, he just gets to leave.

"What is it?" Shangguan Quan decided to ask. While he didn't like the idea just like Hognqi, he wasn't going to immediately say no to it.

"It's regarding this," Alex said as she showed them his left arm. "If within the next year, you are able to help me get my arm back, for the next 15 years, I will dedicate all my time to exclusively serving your sects and clans."

Quan frowned a little. "How old are you, junior Yu?" he asked.

"25," Alex said with a smile.

'So young,' the both of them thought and immediately changed their thoughts for a few of the things. Alex's offer looked a little better than before.

Still, getting an arm back in a year was not something they could do at all.

"Even if we get you to saint realm in a year, which is impossible, it will still take you many years to grow your arm back," Hongqi said.

"As for the ones that can heal you... can the princess help him?" Quan asked Hongqi.

"I don't know," Hongqi said. "They are so secretive with that healing crystal ball."

"And the Lightsworns will never do anything to betray the royal family, so we can't get answers out of them," Quan said.

"That's what happens when you swear an oath to the heavens," Hongqi said.

"I'm afraid I can't think of any ideas then," Quan said.

"Sigh, I was hoping seniors would know something," Alex said while putting on a sad face.

'Why the hell does no one know for sure what the healing crystal does?' he thought to himself. He simply wanted someone to tell him that the path of Lighsworns would be fruitless so that he would stop having hope.

'All I can do now is hope that I reach Saint realm soon enough,' he thought.

"Is there really nothing else to get you to join us?" they asked one last time.

After Alex said no, they decided to leave it be.

Liang Qiu and Han Daiyu returned after seeing their seniors leave.

"How did it go?" Liang Qiu asked him.

Alex smiled and said, "You should know already given that you were eavesdropping on us."

"What? Nonsense! I would never do that," she said.

Alex didn't say anything else. He looked to the side of the boat as the surrounding flew past in a blur.

This boat was at least 4 times as fast as his own boat, and it didn't even look like it was being forced to move at its top speed.

Alex remembered something and finally turned around.

"Right, I keep meaning to ask, but don't get the chance," he said. "What exactly is the pill you want to make?"

Liang Qiu hesitated a bit.

"Am I still not good enough to learn that?" he asked.

Finally, Liang Qiu gave up and brought out a talisman, and handed it to him.

Alex looked at the recipe and immediately frowned. "That's a weird recipe," he said out loud. "Most of the ingredients on this list have earth energy. I've never seen something so extreme."

"I shouldn't have doubted you to know that," Laing Qiu said. "Yes, that pill's recipe mostly consists of Earth element ingredients."

"That is because the pill that recipe is for is a pill that will significantly improve the Earth Spiritual root of a person."

Chapter 693: Importance of Spiritual Roots

"Improve the Earth Spiritual root?" Alex asked, not sure if he heard her correctly.

"Yes," Liang Qiu said. "It will improve the Earth spiritual root of a person."

"Can it turn a lesser spiritual root into a superior one?" Alex asked with a curious look on his face.

Han Daiyu chuckled a little when she heard that, while Liang Qiu simply sighed.

"It seems alchemist Yu does not know about spiritual roots then. Given your capabilities, I would have expected you to know a lot about it," Liang Qiu said.

"I'm sorry?" Alex looked confused. What was he wrong about?

"Don't be," Liang Qiu said. "It's not just you. Most of the world is also unaware of this fact. We only came to learn it about a thousand years ago from the meteor shower."

"You see, people think there are two types of people. Those who have bad spiritual roots, and those who have good spiritual roots."

"But that is wrong," Liang Qiu said. "It is instead a spectrum and you fall somewhere in between."

"Of course, someone will have perfectly amazing spiritual roots. Some will have embarrassingly bad spiritual roots. But that is not all. Some had good, but not great. Some had bad, but still usable."

"Even if two people are said to have Superior or Lesser spiritual roots, they will still have some differences in which is better or worse," Liang Qiu said.

"What we have come to learn is that, even if you were to be born with a so-called Lesser spiritual roots, there are ways to improve upon it and make it better."

"Until now, this had just been a theory for us. A piece of knowledge no one could verify. But now, we've finally found a piece of the puzzle that will prove it all."

"This recipe," she said.

Alex looked stunned. "This did not come with the meteors?" he asked.

"No," Han Daiyu shook her head. "We found it 3 years ago in the demon realm when one of the major locations inside opened up. You might have heard about it."

"House of the Undying?" Alex asked with a surprised expression.

"Yes, us two came upon the same room where this recipe was kept. I got the recipe, while she got the explanation of what it was."

"It wasn't until nearly a year later when we talked about our treasures from the demon realm that we found out we had the other half of each other's treasure."

"Since that day, we've been going around searching for the ingredients. Unfortunately, while most of the ingredients were easy to find, the Corrosive Willow's bark was impossible to find."

"That was where you came in," Liang Qiu finished.

"Do you have the talisman with the information, sister Daiyu?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Han Daiyu quickly gave it to Alex which he read. Once again, it looked like a diary of some sort.

[I have translated the words written on those papers and have come up with the recipe for their pills.]

[This pill is ingenious. It will improve a person's Earth spiritual root by a decent amount, but it has to be used while they are still under the True Emperor realm.]

[Unfortunately, I am unable to create these pills that humans make.]

Alex felt shocked, even though he felt he shouldn't have. 'This is another diary of the Undying God, isn't it?' he thought.

'This man was able to translate the Human language?' Alex thought.

He reread the talisman all over again and got a little confused.

"Sister Liang, do you practice any Earth-aligned cultivation method?" he asked.

"No," Liang Qiu said. "I do have some techniques that require earth Qi, but they're not my most important skills. My most important skills all have to do with the spear after all."

"Then why all the hassle?" Alex asked. "It doesn't say that the roots will improve significantly, just by a decent amount."

"Then why are you going so far for this?" Alex asked. "I understand that this will improve your Earth roots by a bit, but for a person that doesn't use Earth-related techniques much, this doesn't seem to demand as much effort as you're putting into it."

Liang Qiu frowned for a bit and sighed. "I know. Daiyu will benefit from it a lot more than I will," she said. "However, I'm not thinking about right now. I'm thinking about the future."

"The future?" Alex gave a confused look. "Are you planning to practice Earth techniques in the future? If so then I can see it being useful a bit. But, If your spiritual root was bad from the beginning, it could be improved only so much, right?"

"No, it's not for techniques," Liang Qiu said. "It's for something else that I'm not sure Alchemist Yu can understand at the moment."

"Please say it anyway," Alex said.

"There's this thing that Saint realm experts will sometimes learn. When you're really in tune with something fundamental of this world and understand it fully, the world will—"

"Are you talking about Dao?" Alex cut her off.

Liang Qiu gave a surprised look. "You know about Dao?" she asked.

"Yes, I have... heard of it," Alex said. He nearly fumbled away that he had learned one already.

"I see," Liang Qiu said with a sigh of relief. "That will make it much easier to explain then."

"You see, one of the ways to learn a Dao is to have a better spiritual root. The better the spiritual root, the easier the understanding of the Dao comes to you," she said.

"Is that true?" Alex asked with wide eyes. He had never heard about it, but they were in a hurry when they left for the demon realm, so Shen Jing must not have had the time to explain it all.

"So spiritual roots improve your chances of learning a Dao huh? I wasn't expecting to have such a revelation for myself when I left the sect this morning," Alex chuckled to himself a little.

"Hmm... so is it difficult for people without spiritual roots of a certain element to learn Dao relating to that element?" Alex asked.

"No," Liang Qiu said with a serious face. "It is impossible for someone without a spiritual root of an element to learn Dao relating to said element."

"That is why even if someone had lesser spiritual roots of all 5 elements, they are still considered to have a future so long as they persevere until they reach the Saint realm where they have more Dao to learn from instead of focusing on simply a few like most of the others do," she said.

"I see," Alex said as he thought about it all. "Thank you for explaining that all to me. I feel enlightened at the moment," he said.

Ignoring what other things the girls said afterward in courtesy, Alex began thinking about something.

'Why did I learn a law relating to fire before everything?' he wondered. 'I have Metal and Yang spiritual roots that have been tempered with the blood blessed by the god, and a fruit that may itself be a sun.'

'Instead of those two, I learned about fire,' he thought. While it was true that he was inspired by the explosion before he began comprehending his law, given how bad his fire root was, he was surprised he even succeeded.

'Wait,' Alex thought to himself. 'Is my Fire Spiritual root even bad?'

As far as Alex could remember, Fire had been one of the better elements that he could control. Flame Mastery Scripture was something that he learned pretty easily, and controlling fire was very easy as well.

'Does that mean I had a good Fire Spiritual root to begin with?' he thought. 'That's right, it could have always been good without ever being great. It was good enough.'

Alex thought that was correct and nothing else would make any sense for him with not just how easily, but also how early he learned the Dao of explosion.

'So, Yang and Metal first, followed by Fire, and finally the rest,' Alex thought when grading his spiritual roots.

'No, Yin at the end. My body is probably messing with that spiritual root already,' he thought to himself.

While deep in thought, Alex was immediately pulled out of it by the sudden stopping of the boat.

"We're here kids," Hongqi shouted from the back.

Alex stood up and walked to the front of the deck to look down below. Finally, he could see the Poison swamp with his own eyes.

Chapter 694: Colorful

Alex looked down below at the vibrant, prismatic fog that covered the ever so colorful valley that was the Poison swamp.

Having been blind the last time he was here, Alex barely knew what only a little of it looked like. Seeing so much of it at once made it look like a place he would want to own.

Of course, that was what most poisonous and venomous plants and animals had as their main trait: Colors that would lure someone to them and then poison them.

The ship lowered down to the top of a large mountain, and even here Alex could smell the familiar acrid smell of the valley waft up through the mountain.

A barrier appeared around the ship, protecting them from the poison down below.

"It's a miracle the plants and beasts in this region haven't escaped and started taking over the other regions of this area," Han Daiyu said.

Alex looked at the nearly 40 kilometers wide swamp and said, "the plants that grow here are ones that can only grow on a swamp. They don't do well on solid land. Since most beasts need to be near such plants, you won't see them move out of here at all."

"Alright girls, take out your protective gears," Han Hongqi said, and within a second both Han Daiyu and Liang Qiu brought out some cylindrical formation-like discs that Alex recognized to be poison evading artifacts.

They were easily available in the markets and cost just a bit more than a Heaven grade True ranked immunity pill that would keep one immune to poisons and such for about a day.

Seeing Alex eat the pill, the other two Saint experts nodded. Of course, Alex didn't eat the pill they thought he did. He just ate a random pill in his storage bag, which he then immediately turned into Qi.

His naval area felt a little fuller than it already was. 'I need to spend some of it and breakthrough,' he thought.

He had come here to train, or at least that was his plan, but from the looks of it, he wouldn't get the chance at all.

"Everyone ready?" Shangguan Quan asked.

"Yes, Master," Liang Qiu answered.

"Good, now go down. We'll look after you from up here," Quan said.

"Oh, are you not coming senior?" Alex asked, clearly surprised.

"No, it's your adventure. We are here to simply make sure you don't die. Everything else is for you to do," Quan said.

Alex's face immediately brightened when he heard that. Maybe he would get a chance to train.

All 3 of them jumped down from the ship and started trekking down the mountain. Within moments, they reached the area where the poison fog started getting more than just visible.

It started affecting them too. At the same time, a small flimsy barrier appeared around the two girls, while Alex simply walked without the need for one.

"We have to be careful," the girls said. "While the barrier may protect us from the fog, anything that touches or attacks us will cause serious trouble."

Alex nodded.

"So, Alchemist Yu. Which way?" Liang Qiu asked.

Alex stopped to look at the nearly 1300 square kilometers of expanse in front of him and gave an embarrassed look as he answered, "I don't know."

"What?" the girls asked.

"I'm sorry, I don't even remember which way I entered from the last time I was here 4 years ago, let alone where the tree is which I saw after many days of travel," Alex said.

"You came here alone?" Liang Qiu gave a puzzled look.

"No, no. I had a senior look after me, just like right now," Alex said.

The girls nodded and said, "Well I guess we should start somewhere then."

Alex nodded and took the way.

As soon as his feet touched the wetland, he started floating on top of it, instead of sinking in it. He was used to this, after all, he had spent a year in this area, and it had only been 3 months since he left.

Alex looked at the thick, colorful fog and frowned at the fact that he couldn't use his spiritual sense to see through it.

He could feel Liang Qiu's spiritual sense looking around them for sneak attacks, but that wouldn't help him look at things.

In the end, he decided to give up on one of his aces in his sleeves for an easier time.

So, without any prompting, he let go of his spiritual sense which immediately flew all around him, and started looking at things as well.

"Woah!" Liang Qiu gave a shocked expression which surprised Han Daiyu.

"What? What is it?" she asked.

Liang Qiu ignored Han Daiyu and turned to Alex to ask, "Alchemist Yu, you have spiritual sense?"

"Ah, yes," Alex said nonchalantly as if he hadn't debated about showing it for a while now. "It's something I acquired a few years ago."

"Wow, you must have been really lucky then," Liang Qiu said.

"Yes, I was lucky," Alex said. "But I wouldn't call it really lucky."

"No way, you are very lucky. Look at Daiyu, she's from a big family and even she doesn't have her spiritual sense unlocked yet," Liang Qiu said.

"Uh, I guess I'm really lucky then," Alex said. "Let's go find this tree now."

Alex didn't let them ask any more questions that would lead him to talk about how he got the lily and instead started looking for the tree.

He kept his spiritual sense at 50 meters at most and did not go further than that. Liang Qiu might not find any problems if he did, but the two Saints up above would definitely notice it.

He didn't want to be questioned right now.

Suddenly, a sword appeared in his hand at the same time a spear appeared in Liang Qiu's.

Han Daiyu looked at the both of them and belatedly took out a hammer on her own.

Alex sensed the beast and found out it was a True Lord 6th realm beast. The exact same cultivation as his body.

Liang Qiu was about to attack when Alex put his hand out to stop her. "Please, let me handle this," he said as a circular shield appeared from his storage bag and started hovering around him.

"Are you sure? Your cultivation is a little..." Liang Qiu said.

"It's fine. You can help me if it looks like I won't win," Alex said and slowly walked forward.

Not even 10 meters away from him was a black salamander with yellow patches of skin all over it.

It was nearly as tall as him and almost 3 meters long without even counting its tail which was another 3 meters long.

It brought out its deep purple, forked tongue and stared at Alex with its slitted, yellow eyes.

Alex knew it had seen him as an enemy after that.

Without hesitation, he dashed forward as the beast shot out its tongue at incredible speed.

Alex could dodge out of the way, but he didn't feel like it. Suddenly, the shield appeared in front of him and with a 'DENG' sound, it blocked the attack.

Alex tried to slash at the forked tongue, but the salamander was too quick at retracting it.

When Alex got close, the beast immediately scampered backward and suddenly a wave of the swamp water came toward him like an ocean wave.

Alex sent out a wind slash and cleared the water from hitting him. At the same time, he saw yellow energy light up from deep beneath him as chunks of wet rock started flying in his direction.

Alex immediately employed the shield to move all around him, carefully blocking each and every piece of rock.

Every single one of those rocks felt like a full-blown attack of a True Lord 4th realm expert. With each hit, Alex felt his Qi drain, but it was so small that he could simply get it back while he was fighting.

It would only get problematic if the beast attacked him with something more—

Alex watched as the salamander spewed out purple liquid from its mouth directly onto him. The area it covered was so wide that Alex would get caught up in it even if he tried to run away.

What he would usually do was teleport away from this location and attack the salamander. But that didn't seem like an option right now.

Not with the girls and the saints watching him. If he teleported, that would be one more technique he would be questioned about and might even try to force him to take it out.

So, he decided to stick with something that was already established as him having it.

As the girls watched, Alex was devoured by the poison shot. Han Daiyu couldn't help but gasp in shock, but Liang Qiu could see everything, so she wasn't worried at all.

"He's fine," she said to Daiyu with a bit of annoyance in her voice. "Why are you afraid for him when you gave him the shield?"

"Uh... he's safe?" she asked and looked at Alex as the purple poison fell onto the swamp water and mixed together with the rest of the poison already on it.

When it was finally off, she saw a brown barrier appear around the shield that fully protected Alex from all the poison.

The moment the poison was gone, Alex put away the barrier and moved his shield to the side in preparation for what the beast's next attack was going to be, and what he was going to do next.

Chapter 695: A Few Friendly Faces

The remainder of the fight lasted quite a bit. Alex fought like he was weaker than he actually was, which to the others seemed normal given his cultivation base was only around True Lord 2nd Realm.

He didn't use Qi or Sword Qi during this fight and kept the attacks only to his physical body.

He did send out slashes from time to time to vent out his Qi that was stagnating, but most of those attacks never landed on the salamander. Intentionally of course.

Finally, after using his shield to block the attack and using his sword to make numerous cuts throughout the salamander, he managed to kill it while taking no damage himself.

"Phew!" Alex wiped the non-existent sweat from his brows and heaved a deep sigh in relief.

"Alchemist Yu, that was amazing," Liang Qiu said. "How did you learn to fight like that?"

"Oh, I learned it from the senior who I came here with last time," Alex said.

"You are quite strong for an alchemist," Han Daiyu said as she stared at the salamander.

"To think you managed to kill something that was 4 realms— what are you doing?" she asked suddenly.

Alex had turned around and started using his sword to carve open the black and yellow salamander.

"Oh, I'm just dismantling the corpse. These beasts are quite good as alchemy ingredients, you know?" he said.

"Is that so?" Liang Qiu asked. "What sort of pill can you make with these parts?"

"I don't know," Alex said simply.

"You... don't know? Then why are you taking these beast parts?" she asked.

"Because I'm going to find out what pills I can make with these," he said.

"So you are going to find out a recipe from these?" Han Daiyu asked.

"Precisely," Alex said and continued dismantling it all. Finally, once he got everything, he placed it in his storage bag and turned around.

"Let's get moving. We need to find the willow tree as soon as we can," Alex said and the three started moving.

As they went along, either more monsters popped up which they were forced to fight, or Alex found a rare ingredient which he was forced to fight something to get.

Either way, they fought a lot.

Alex got to fight most of the time, but there were times when the beast was so strong that he couldn't possibly win against it without showing off more of his skills which he didn't want to do.

So, instead, he let the girls do the fighting since they were stronger than him.

Han Daiyu's fighting style was rather simple. She hit things until it stopped moving. Her hammer, which was naturally heavy, was enough to kill most beasts with a single blow.

When she activated her physique, her strength would become so massive that she could probably lift 5 of such hammers without any problem.

Other than that, she would use her Earth techniques to use ranged attacks and then kill the beasts.

When Alex had seen her attack the door back in the demon realm, he was mistaken into thinking she could only attack at melee range, but now he realized how incredibly stupid he was being.

No one in their right mind would train one of their best to have such an obvious vulnerability. Han Daiyu had more in her arsenal than Alex originally believed her to have.

Liang Qiu on the other hand was closer to what Alex thought Han Daiyu would be.

Her mastery of the spear had reached well into Spear Qi and each one of her attacks sent out slashes of Spear Qi toward the enemy.

Unlike his own, Liang Qiu's spear Qi had developed to the point that each of her spear Qi was in the shape of a spearhead.

'I need to train my Sword Qi until it starts looking more like swords all the time,' he thought to himself.

Liang Qiu's mastery of the spear had left him breathless. The way she moved with it was like the spear was an extension of herself.

Each one of her attacks was precise and accurate, and it was never less nor more than what the enemy needed to die.

Unfortunately, Liang Qiu didn't use any of her other skills, so Alex didn't get to see the full ability of an elite from an elite sect.

Even after night fell, they continued searching for the tree, but it didn't seem like it was going to be anywhere near here.

Alex came across a few places that looked familiar, but he would have to go through a year's worth of memory to understand exactly what route he took to get here.

As such, directly finding the willow's location was truly very hard.

Other than that, Alex was also searching for something else in the poison swamp.

He had come here with 3 objectives in total. The first one was their collective objective of finding the willow tree.

The second one was his training to breakthrough in his cultivation.

Finally, the third one was to find ingredients with a high concentration of Yin in them.

He had already used up the ones he had taken from here and his body was starting to heat up once again.

It was still in the starting phase, but it was getting harder and harder to maintain. Soon, it would certainly reach a level where it would be impossible.

Alex feared that day more than he thought he should.

The next day went by the same as well. Since the land they had to tread was so big, they still hadn't found a willow tree at all.

Alex remembered seeing only one tree, so he was starting to fear that there really was just one tree.

Finding one single tree in a sea of toxic fog, poisonous plants, and venomous beasts was going to take longer than he had expected.

Plus, the girls were forced to stop from time to time to recharge the artifact that they had been using.

Every 6 or so hours, they needed to replace the spirit stones inside of it and that took about 15 minutes out of their day every day.

On the second night, Alex finally felt like he was ready. He had fought all day yesterday and today, and his body felt ready to breakthrough.

So, he told the girls and they agreed to it. Besides, they had been walking around for nearly 2 days now and wanted rest.

Alex sat beside a naked tree with the girls also cultivating on either side. They had set up a barrier formation around them, so they could safely cultivate inside of it.

With how long it had been since Alex had broken through and how ready his body was, it didn't even take him a full rotation of his Qi to simply break through to the next realm.

Liang Qiu and Han Daiyu who were next to him looked at him in shock as he had broken through the moment they sat down.

'So fast,' they thought and wanted to ask questions, but decided not to when they saw that he was still mid cultivation.

Half the night went quietly, but then around midnight, Alex heard something slam down on the ground.

It was so fast his spiritual sense didn't even see the object enter his senses. When the two objects finally did land, he realized that it was Shangguan Quan and Han Hongqi who had come down from the ship that was hovering in the sky.

Before either of the 3 of them could ask what was going on, Shangguan Quan's cold voice spoke to someone in front of them.

"Fellow Daoist, please go away from here. These children are under our protection," he shouted from beyond the barrier.

Han Hongqi brought out a hammer of his own as he slowly circulated his Qi, activating his physique.

"Don't mind my presence, fellow Daoists. I am not here to hurt your juniors," A voice came from far away.

Alex heard the voice and something about it gave him a familiar feeling.

"Then you won't mind going away, right?" Han Hongqi asked.

"I am here to speak to that junior there," the voice said and Alex finally remembered who it was.

Without hesitation, Alex stood up and walked past the barrier to bow into the darkness.

"Greetings senior," he said to the newly arrived figure.

Slowly, through the marsh slithered something purple with 6 bright slitted eyes. It was the Three-headed Hydra.

"I thought you had already left. I see you've returned, young human," the Hydra spoke to Alex's mind.

"Just for a few days, senior," Alex said "we're here to find something. Once we do we'll leave."

"Hmm," the Hydra stuck its tongue out. "Is senior here?"

"No, I'm afraid I haven't seen him in 3 years," Alex said.

"I see," the Hydra said. "Well, doesn't seem like you'll need him."

The Hydra looked towards the two Saints next to Alex who held curious looks on their faces.

"So, what do you want here?" the Hydra asked. "You're in my domain right now. If it is here, I will give it to you."

"I'm looking for a willow tree," Alex said and started explaining everything he knew about the tree from its looks, shape, and size, all the way to what its surrounding area was like and what beasts lived there.

"Hmm, that sounds like a location in that direction," one of the Hydra's heads turned to point in a certain direction.

"If you go there, you can find it," it said.

"Is that so, thank you for your assistance, senior," Alex said.

"Don't worry. Just give my greetings to senior," the Hydra said as it slithered away, leaving the confused group.

Alex looked back at the group with a happy expression. "It looks like we know where to go now."

Chapter 696: Bristled Spider

"What was that?" Han Daiyu asked with a surprised face.

"How do you know a beast, junior?" Shangguan Quan asked.

"Oh, we met the last time I was here with a senior," Alex said without hesitation.

"And you made a big enough impression for that beast to remember?" Quan asked.

"No, I'm afraid I don't have such capabilities. It was the senior I was with who made the impression," Alex said with a rueful smile. "The Hydra most likely came because he was scared that the senior was back here again."

"Oh, Who is this senior that would have such reputations?" Hongqi asked.

"I'm afraid I can't answer that," Alex said. "The senior's information is not mine to give."

"Not even a name?" Quan asked.

Alex simply shook his head.

"Fine, continue with what you were doing," Quan said and flew back to the ship in the air, leaving behind the 3 of them.

Alex turned around and gave an apologetic look. "I'm sorry your cultivation was disrupted because of me," he said.

"It's alright. Since we know where to go, we should leave now," Liang Qiu said.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah! Let's go quickly. I can't wait to eat that pill," Han Daiyu excitedly urged them all to leave.

Alex nodded and the three of them left the area. Now that they knew the general area of where they had to go, Alex started going through all the different memories of anywhere he was around.

He didn't trace it all the way, but just enough to see where he went next or where he had come from.

The further they went along, the more Alex started regretting not taking the ship there. He forgot just how long it would take to walk through this swampland.

Even after daybreak, they were nowhere near the willow at all. Instead, they were forced to keep fighting the different beasts along the way.

It wasn't until halfway into the next day that Alex reached a place that looked familiar to a place he had been after arriving at the willow.

"We're close," he exclaimed and looked around as he started tracing the memories back to the willow.

"This way," he said and walked in a certain direction.

The closer he got, the more Alex started sprinting. The girls followed him for another 5 minutes, and finally, they reached the location where the willow was.

Just like Alex's description, the willow tree looked extremely normal with green trees and brown bark. But in a sea of abnormalities, the simple scenery of normal looked very unique.

Alex slowly walked closer to the tree and stopped.

Liang Qiu stopped as well when her spiritual sense noticed the same thing Alex did.

"What are those?" she asked curiously.

"It looks like a bunch of porcupines stuck together— oh," Alex saw the beast slowly rise out from underwater and finally saw what it was.

"Oh," Liang Qiu finally saw it too. "A Bristled Spider."

A dark brown spider with hairy legs slowly climbed onto the willow while its 8 different colored eyes never left any of them.

Its back was full of green and red bristles which seemed like it would be ready to shoot out at any moment.

Alex's eyes shined when he saw that. "Ooh, can I fight it?" he asked excitedly.

"Uh... yeah, sure," Liang Qiu said.

"Yeah, let him fight. He's shown us he's able to handle such beasts," Han Daiyu said.

"Yeah, but this one is especially troublesome, you know," Liang Qiu said. "If it's true that each of those bristles contains a different type of poison, then he would be in trouble if he is hit by them."

"He had the shield," Han Daiyu said. Liang Qiu had no more reasons to keep him back and let him fight.

Alex felt the True Lord 6th realm cultivation base of the spider and got a little easier. He wasn't here to fight a difficult battle, but to test out his strength after he had broken through to the 3rd realm.

Alex brought out his shield and kept it floating around him. At the same time, he brought out the poison sword and charged the spider.

The moment rushed towards the spider, the spider suddenly sprayed poison out of the bristles.

Alex hadn't expected it to shoot liquid instead of the bristles themselves. However, given how far he was, he managed to dodge it easily and continued with his charge.

At the same time, he sent out a water splash toward the spider. Alex's water slash was a mortal grade technique so it was very poor in terms of damage. Had it not been Alex who used it, the damage the technique would have done was far lower than his own cultivation base.

With Alex's Qi, it easily reached the power of True Lord's 8th realm. However, Alex was clearly playing around as the water slash struck quite far from the spider.

"What are you doing? Finish it quickly," Han Daiyu said.

"I can't," Alex shouted. "I don't want to damage the tree."

Only after hearing him did Han Daiyu realize how stupid she was being. "Sorry, continue at your own pace," she said and looked away to hide her embarrassed face.

"I think he's hiding his powers from us," Liang Qiu spoke directly into Han Daiyu's mind.

"What do you mean?" Han Daiyu asked aloud, before realizing she wasn't supposed to speak here.

"His sword skill feels like something one can only acquire after a long time of practice. You can tell he knows the sword very well and knows exactly how he can use it," she said.

Han Daiyu shook her head, not understanding the implications.

"Anyone who's mastered to this great level of the sword is bound to start showing signs of Sword Intent at the very least," She told her. "However, I can't find a hint of it on his sword."

"Then..." Han Daiyu murmured.

"He's hiding it," Liang Qiu said. "He's hiding his Sword Intent. He's stronger than he's making himself out to be."

"Which was already surprising, to begin with."

Liang Qiu suddenly brought out a talisman and asked her master, "is his cultivation base real? Are we being misled?"

"No," an answer came from Quan. "It really is True Lord 3rd realm."

"Hmm..." Liang Qiu thought to herself. 'Then is he perhaps using his Sword Intent from time to time to give himself a boost in damage?'

Liang Qiu wouldn't even begin to think that Alex had Sword Qi as that was not something one could acquire while so young while being a prodigy in alchemy.

Expecting him to have Sword Intent was already her given him high appraisal based on his age and profession.

Other than that, she also simply wouldn't imagine Alex to be a body cultivator either. Those usually never got stronger than self-tempering realm levels of strength due to how hard it was to cultivate one's body.

Alex's fight with the spider continued. He sent out weak slashes from time to time to get it off of the tree, and when it didn't, he started getting more and more aggressive and went into close-ranged combat.

He slashed at the back of the spider, but surprisingly it was too tough an exterior for him to breakthrough. At least, not while the bristles were still on the spider.

He needed to force it to throw them his way.

So, Alex started to become a greater threat to the spider than he originally led it to believe.

With just the slightest hint of Metal Qi poured into his sword Alex struck its back once again.

This time, there was a definite mark left behind on its back and even a few of the bristles were broken and leaking venoms.

Immediately, the bristles flared to life as the spider carelessly sprayed it all in Alex's direction.

Using the barrier on the shield, Alex was able to block all of the red and green bristles.

Each passing day, he was starting to like the shield more and more. After the bristles stopped firing, Alex put away the barrier and charged forward.

But as he did, he realized the spider had kept some bristles to itself, which it only threw out a moment later.

Alex hurriedly tried to bring back the barrier, but he was a step too late and one of the bristles suddenly hit his thigh.

Alex felt pain in his thigh as the poison in the bristles started affecting him instantly.

The girls saw this and tried to hurry over, but Alex stopped them. He pulled out the bristle, leaving a deep wound that bled a lot.

He started circulating his Qi as per the cultivation technique and brought out a pill to eat.

While his body got rid of the poison, he used the healing energy from the pill to fix his body.

Then, he stood back up and stared directly at the spider. There was no wasting any more time now.

The moment he confirmed that the spider had no more bristles, he ran directly onto it and started making deep gashes on its body.

The spider tried to fight back, but nothing it did could stop Alex whose body cultivation was the same as its own cultivation.

Finally, Alex severed its head from its body while its 8 wide eyes stared up.

Alex took a big sigh of relief and slumped to the ground. After a few seconds, he turned back to the girl to see their concerned faces.

"I'm fine," Alex said. "More importantly, you should start getting those barks."

Chapter 697: Return

Once the girls started tearing up the bark using metal tools, making sure to not touch it at all, Alex also joined in and tore up some barks on his own.

"Wait, where are your tools?" Han Daiyu asked.

"Oh, I can touch this," Alex said. "I ate an immunity pill earlier that stops all poison from affecting my body. Didn't you see?"

"Oh, okay," Han Daiyu said and continued.

Finally, they managed to turn the tree naked by taking out the entire outer cover from its trunk.

Alex wanted to take more than just the bark, but given how rare this tree was for them, he decided to leave it be and let it grow and spread.

While the bark may not grow back, he hoped more willows could be found here instead.

'If only I had some botany knowledge,' Alex thought to himself. That was another thing that was to be added to the list of information he needed to learn.

The ship lowered from the sky and everyone got on it to leave the poison swamp.

Alex looked back in a bit of disappointment. He wanted to train harder and more, but with so many people it was hard.

Also, he found maybe 2 Yin plants that could help him. Other than that, he would have to find yin plants and artifacts through the guild or some auctions that apparently took place every month in the Dawnspring city.

Those monthly auctions wouldn't have such important treasures, but he would still have to go so as to not miss them.

Once they all boarded the ship, Han Hongqi immediately moved to the hell out of that toxic place.

"You guys get all you needed?" Shangguan Quan asked as he turned around.

"Yes, master," Liang Qiu said.

The group silently returned back to the city and stopped in front of the Flowing Brush sect.

"Thank you for helping us find the plant, Alchemist Yu," Liang Qiu said.

"Yes, truly thank you," Han Daiyu said.

"It was no problem for me," Alex said. "So... what now? Do I get to make the pill or do you still want to go to senior Xue?"

Liang Qiu chuckled a bit. "We chose you the moment we decided to show you the recipe," Liang Qiu said.

"Oh, thank you for trusting in me," Alex said.

"I hope you won't break that trust," Han Daiyu said.

"I promise you, I won't," Alex said.

Liang Qiu brought out a small storage bag and gave it to Alex. "I hope I can get to see the pill very soon," she said.

Alex took the storage bag and looked at it once before shaking his head. "This won't do," Alex said.

"Huh? What's wrong?" she asked.

"The ingredients are too few. I will need a lot more," Alex said.

"Eh? That's 6 sets of ingredients. Isn't that enough for 2 people?" she asked.

"It would be if I were to only follow that recipe," Alex said. "But I won't. I will have to see if the recipe is good or not first, and if it isn't, I will have to recreate it."

"Recreate it? With different ingredients?" Shangguan Quan asked curiously.

"Oh no, just used the same ingredients a little differently," Alex said. "I try to find what is wrong with the recipe and try to fix those parts. In doing so, the recipe subtly changes."

"Okay, then I will send Qiu'er tomorrow to the Alchemy guild. Tell her if you require more ingredients or not then," Shangguan Quan said.

"Well, I guess Daiyu will have to go too then," Hongqi said.

"I'll be there," Han Daiyu said.

"Alright, go take some rest, for now, junior Yu. You deserve it," Han Hongqi said.

"Yes, senior," Alex said and left the boat. Just as he did, someone flew out of the sect and looked in surprise at the people in front of him.

"Senior Quan, Senior Hongqi, what are you doing here?" Sect Master Qin asked when he saw the two. He turned to Alex and back towards the two and asked, "Did little Yu cause some trouble?"

"Haha, sect master Qin, you have nothing to worry about. Junior Yu helped us with some task and now we've come to return him, that's all," Hongqi replied.

"It's good seeing you, sect master Qin," Shangguan Quan said and nodded. The girls greeted him as well and after a short talk, the boat left.

Qin Shan looked dumbfounded, same as all the other guards and guests that were outside the sect gates.

"What's happening?" he asked Alex.

Alex looked around and said, "Let's go inside first."

Once they entered the sect, Alex explained everything as best he could. When Qin Shan realized that Alex was going to make some important pills for Han Daiyu and Liang Qiu, he started breathing heavily in fear.

"You must make sure the pills are good. Pay extra attention to not mess up their ingredients. Also, make it as soon as you can. You can't keep people like that waiting," Qin Shan said.

"I understand, sect master," Alex said and went to his mother.

"Brother!" Pearl shouted and ran up to him, jumping directly into his embrace.

"Hey Pearl, did you look after mother?" he asked.

"Yes, I did," Pearl said proudly.

"You're back," Helen came up to him and suddenly took out a talisman. She threw it at him and suddenly, the air touching him and around him burned with brilliant light.

When the light disappeared, he looked confused. "What was that?" he asked.

"It's a talisman to get rid of the poison in the air. Since you came back from the poison swamp, I had to make sure you didn't bring back any poison of your own," Helen said.

"Oh, you didn't have to worry about that, mother. I can do that on my own," Alex said as he flexed Yang Qi.

"Whatever," Helen said. "So, how was the trip? You were with girls, right? Come tell me."

Alex chuckled a bit and started telling his mother about his visit to the poison swamp.

Chapter 698: Preparations

That night, Alex went back to his room and prepared to make the new pill.

He read the recipe and thought about it all for a few minutes. There were 16 ingredients exactly, of which 4 of them would be considered rare.

Of course, they weren't as rare as the willow they just found, but it was rare enough that only one or two of such ingredients would pop up in the market every day.

'I will have to gather them and use them towards the end,' he thought. For now, he simply had to make the pill.

'Maybe I won't even need to do anything,' Alex thought. 'Maybe this pill is already the best it can be.'

Since this was a pill recipe from the long past when humans and demons fought, Alex had more faith in the recipe than the new ones made by local alchemists.

So, once the cauldron was properly heated up, he started making the pill.

One by one, he put in the ingredients and followed the recipe as closely as he could on the first try without making any mistakes.

As time went along, he put one ingredient after another. The ingredients were all filled with either Earth energy or neutral energy. So, as more and more Earth energy mixed together, the final energy ended up becoming a very dense and strong Earth energy that was hovering on the verge of reaching Saint level.

Fortunately, it didn't and Alex managed to guide the energy into the pill.

What came out of the cauldron was a brown pill with a dirt-like smell. He could see spots of black too, and from that, he could easily tell how unsymmetrical the pill was.

It was better than most pills he had seen, but it still needed a rework.

Alex checked the Harmony and realized that it was 52%. It was decent, but not good enough. Even if he fixed the other problems like good quality ingredients, proper control of fire, or a high-quality cauldron, Alex was sure that the most he could do were reach 60% with it.

If he had a technique to perfectly form a pill, then maybe he could push it to 75% too. But he would never be able to reach 100% with what he had at the moment.

Alex went ahead and made 2 more of the pills, which came out better than the first one with 54%, and 56%.

Most alchemists would consider this an amazing Harmony, but Alex wanted more. He knew he could get more, so instead, he decided to go ahead and rewrite the formula.

Of course, he didn't have any ingredients at the moment, so it would have to wait for tomorrow.

In the meantime, Alex thought of something and brought out an ingredient to turn it into powder.

Once he was turned to powder, he studied it carefully, checking its shape and size before discarding it for another of the same thing.

For the entire night, Alex did the same thing with the same ingredients, changing only the speed of the ingredient's motion, the direction of the motion, and the heat of the fire, all in order to bring out the energy of the ingredient at the constant rate as a certain pill's recipe dictated.

For the whole night, Alex dwelled on just that one ingredient, and it wasn't even an ingredient for the pill he needed to make.

Once morning came around, he spent 2 hours practicing his talisman and formation skills before leaving to go see his mother.

"I might not return for a few days, mother," Alex said. "Keep Pearl with you, and tell him to train while he can."

"Where are you going?" Helen asked curiously. "Are you going somewhere with those girls?"

"No, mother. I will be at the guild for the next 3 days working on the pill I told you about. If I succeed, I can help you and myself improve our spiritual roots," Alex said.

"Alright, alright, no need to get defensive. I was just teasing you," Helen said. "Go, I'll take care of Pearl."

"No, I'm taking care of mother," Pearl interjected.

"Yes you are," Helen said as she rubbed his head.

"Bye," Alex said and left the sect to go to the guild.

When he arrived at the guild, it was still morning, so instead of doing anything else, he started buying as many ingredients as he could for the other pill.

Alex sweat a bit when he realized he had spent over 4000 True spirit stones on what most would consider a frivolous purchase. However, since he knew it was important, his heart, fortunately, felt no negative impact.

He waited a few minutes for Liang Qiu and Han Daiyu to come around, but it seemed it was really early for that. So, he took a few missions on a whim and went to complete them.

An hour later, Alex came out with 5 different pills and handed them to the staff who looked at him with a dumbfounded face when they realized he had taken this mission just an hour ago.

5 pills in an hour meant that he made exactly 1 pill every 12 minutes, and that was without wasting a single minute, which was impossible.

Secretly, the staff was starting to think more and more of Alex as an alchemist.

Alex went back outside and managed to find Liang Qiu and Han Daiyu waiting for him.

"Oh, sister Laing, sister Han, you finally came," Alex said as he walked towards him.

"Alchemist Yu! How could you make us wait for so long?" Han Daiyu complained.

"My apologies. I waited for a while, but you never came so I went to complete a few missions for the guild," Alex said.

"Whatever," Han Daiyu shook her hands to tell him to get over it. Then her face made the most excited smile as she asked, "Did you make it? Is it done?"

Alex shook his head. "I'm afraid I was correct," he said. "I will need at least 2 if not 3 weeks to change the recipe around. Otherwise, even if you were to take the recipe to senior Xue, you will never end up with pills above 60%."

"You tried it already then?" Liang Qiu asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "I reached 54% and 56%. If you want those pills then I will hand them to you right now, but I suggest you wait for the next 3 weeks so I can improve the pill."

"Are you sure you can improve it?" Han Daiyu asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "I'm confident I can. All you will have to do is wait 3 weeks."

"Alright, if you can really improve it, do it," Liang Qiu said. "I've already waited 2 years for this. I can wait 20 more days."

"Thank you," Alex said. "So... uh... about the ingredients"

"How many do you need?" Liang Qiu asked.

"At least 50 each," Alex said with an embarrassed smile.

"50 each? Are you serious?" Liang Qiu asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "With that, I can increase the pill's Harmony by at least 10% if not more."

"That's tempting really," Liang Qiu said. "Alright, let me go do it right now."

Liang Qiu stood to go to the reception to buy the ingredients but stopped.

"Should I make a mission while I'm at it?" she asked.

Alex shook his head. "No need, this pill won't be under the guild's name. I assume you would want to keep it that way," Alex said.

"Yes," Liang Qiu said. "Then I will just buy the ingredients for now."

"You may not be able to find a lot of the rare ones, so leave that part to me," Alex said.

Liang Qiu nodded and went to buy.

"I was looking forward to that pill you know? Can't I just eat this one right now and take a better one later?" Han Daiyu asked.

"I don't know how helpful that would be, sister Daiyu," Alex said. "If this pill improves your roots, it won't be as much as the other pill I will make."

"So, if you were to eat this, improve your root, and eat the next pill, I'm afraid that your roots will not respond to the pill like they would have when they were weak," Alex said.

"It's like—"

"I understand," Han Daiyu said. "I was just saying what was on my mind. I can wait too."

Alex smiled back at her. "I promise you, sister Han. I will make the best pill you've ever seen," Alex said.

"Is that so? I come from a big family you know. I've seen great pills. I've even eaten Saint rank pills," she said.

"I promise you won't have seen pills like what I will make," Alex said. "Ahem, barring saint rank pills of course."

Liang Qiu returned with a bag full of ingredients and handed it to Alex. "I couldn't get some ingredients, so you will have to get them on our behalf. There are some spirit stones in that storage bag, you can use them however necessary."

"I only ask that you make our pill with it," Liang Qiu said.

Alex looked through the storage bag and saw every single ingredient. Just as he asked, there were 50 each of about 12 ingredients.

Of the last 4, there were between 2 to 10 of them. 'How much do I have to buy them?' Alex thought and looked through the spirit stones when he stopped.

"Um... isn't 10 thousand spirit stones a bit too much? I'm not sure I'll need more than 3 thousand," Alex said.

Liang Qiu smiled. "Use however many as you want. I just want the pill," she said.

Alex smiled. "Very well then," he said. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I seem to have a new task come upon me."

Alex waved the two goodbye and went back to the alchemy room to make this new pill.

Chapter 699: Spring Mist Pavilion

A week into the process, Alex decided not to rush through the whole thing and get himself burnt out.

So, after going through 10 of the ingredients. He decided to take the rest of the 2 weeks going through 1 ingredient each.

The process was as simple as it could get by now since he had done it over 20 times already.

Alex would first go through each ingredient and find out the shape of each and every iteration.

Then, once he knew in detail all the shapes of the powder, he would try to combine the different shapes in such a way that it would fit perfectly without any gap in the pill.

The combination was what held the energy once it was finalized. One such combination needed to be duplicable for the rest of the pill as well.

The less gap there was, the better the pill would store energy. So, the shape of the overall combination also needed to be able to come together to make as little gap as possible.

Alex didn't worry about the overall combination, but rather the individual ones which he would have to do manually until he figured out a way to understand the perfect technique he had in his mind.

For that, however, Alex needed to learn the Dao of Technique, which didn't seem like it was going to happen anytime soon.

So, Alex decided to do what he should have done a long time ago. He decided to go buy a Pill forming technique.

After asking a few of the staff, he came to know about a large store owned by a merchant that hosted any and all sorts of techniques.

They let him know that alchemists have also bought pill-forming techniques from there.

Alex remembered pill-forming techniques back in the library of the Hong Wu sect, but those were either Common or Earth rank techniques, something that would never enter his eyes.

Not even his master made him study those as she knew that wasn't necessary. Especially since he had a spiritual sense from the start, so there was no need to use a technique to form a pill.

Most of those techniques were simply meant to find every little bit of the powder and clump it into a ball anyway. The only difference between most would be how they found every little bit.

Alex made his way through the city towards the northwestern side which was where most people entered the city.

So, for the sake of convenience, this area was also the commercial sector of the city while the ones closer to the mountains were treated as the residential area, even though there already was one outside of the walls.

After 20 or so minutes, Alex reached the building that the staff told him about.

The Spring Mist Pavilion.

Alex looked at the tall, pagoda-like building that was equally as wide as it was tall.

It was like a supermarket to his eyes where anything and everything was sold.

Alex went in and looked around only to realize that the ground floor was for common folks that did not cultivate. It consisted of stores that sold food, drinks, clothes, furniture, and every other thing a regular person might require.

Then, Alex noticed a stairway that went to the next floor. After going atop it, Alex finally noticed a slew of cultivators all doing their own things.

The floor seemed to be divided into 6 or so different sections each with massive names hung atop each.

Artifacts and Weapons as well as Cultivation books and techniques took up nearly half the entire area. The rest of it was occupied by Pills, Formations, Talisman, and Miscellaneous.

The very first room he was greeted by was pills to his left and talismans to his right.

Alex chuckled as he realized this was not a random placement and was placed here since most people would regularly come here for these items after all.

Only rarely did anyone want to buy techniques or artifacts when compared to pills and talismans.

Alex curiously walked over to the right where the Miscellaneous store was past the Talisman store and saw that it was full of beasts, paintings, puppets, and various types of treasures that one wouldn't normally find in any of the other sections.

Alex walked past it and the artifacts section to reach the skill section that was on the complete opposite side of the stairs.

As he was walking past the artifacts, Alex saw various items and objects that piqued his interest and he stopped to check.

Swords, spears, shields, armors, amulets, masks, shoes, and various other things were laid in plain sight for everyone to see.

Alex thought of sensing what formations they were possibly using to keep it all safe while so easy to reach and steal, but decided not to.

When he was about to leave, his eyes fell on something that made him stop touch subconsciously touch his left arm.

'Should I get one?' he thought to himself when he saw the fake arm.

Alex was starting to doubt another Blood Spirit Ginseng would become available for him to purchase. The last time one was available to buy, it lasted nearly 4 whole years before someone bought it.

Given such a lack of necessity for the ingredient, it was likely no one would bother selling it. Even if they did, for the sake of speed, they would sell it in auctions.

As a normal person, he couldn't be in every auction in every place at the same time.

Aside from the pill, even the royal princess was losing his trust more and more to fix his arm.

Alex shook his head and got rid of the thoughts. "If I want one, I will get one later," he thought and went to the skill section of the store.

Alex was about to ask for a technique when he noticed something weird. He looked at the various figures standing around the section as well as the people working on it and realized that none of them were in the True realms.

'A coincidence?' he thought.

"Hi, do you have Heaven-grade techniques here?" Alex asked. Immediately, all the people turned to look at him like they had just seen a clown.

"No, dear guest. This floor is only for Common grade techniques. If you want better techniques you will have to go a rank higher," the store clerk said.

Alex said his thanks and left the place to go up a floor again. Once he reached there, he quickly asked to find out that this one was for everything Earth grade only.

Alex had to go one floor above again. Finally, reaching the 4th floor of the pagoda, Alex looked around.

As a pagoda, the pavilion's width got smaller and smaller as it went higher. So, by the time he was on the 4th floor, the total area of the stores had dropped to a third of its original size.

Alex didn't bother with the other 5 and directly went to the room with the books and techniques.

The floor got more majestic and well maintained the higher it went. On this floor, the entire floor was tiled with pristine white marble that Alex could see his reflections on.

The store was also not a mess with customers as there was more staff here than people coming to buy.

The moment Alex arrived a girl walked up to him.

"Whatever you need, honored guest, this He Yin is here to help you," the beautiful store clerk said to him.

"Hi sister Yin, I'm looking for a pill forming technique. Would you guys happen to have one?" Alex asked.

"Pill forming technique? Let me check," the girl said as she brought out a medallion and looked through it.

After a while, she opened her eyes and looked at Alex. "We have 3, honored guests. Let me get them for you," she said.

Alex nodded and watched her go. He found a sofa in the corner and sat there to wait. There were also other people already on it who too seemed to be waiting for their staff to return.

After 5 minutes, He Yin returned with 3 different books in her hand, all of which were sealed with a talisman on top.

Without breaking through the talisman, one couldn't read the book. If it was torn, they would know.

Fortunately, it allowed the buyer to read the technique's name and what it was about.

[Sublime Pill Convergence Technique]

[Earth Aligned technique that creates a small pocket of gravity to move the powder throughout the cauldron, while absorbing all the energy. Once done, it pulls all the powder in the cauldron to immediately form a pill. This technique is usable after you have properly mixed the energy.]

Alex shook his head. This wasn't it.

[Golden Star Pill Forming technique]

[Metal Aligned technique that puts extra metal energy onto the pill and then pulls it into one solid pill before destroying the metal energy. In the process, it also absorbs all the energy in the cauldron. Suitable for after the energy of the ingredients is processed.]

Alex sighed and took the third one, this was his only hope now.

[Summer Breeze Pill Forming technique]

[Wood Aligned technique that used the wind to pull ingredients...]

Alex didn't even bother finishing it when he realized it was the same thing. None of these techniques creators gave a hint of knowing what Combinations and Structures were for a pill.

"Are there any more?" Alex asked.

"I'm afraid this is it, honored guest," He Yin said.

"I see. Thank you," Alex said and turned left. This trip had been a massive waste of time.

He walked over to the stairs to go down when he noticed something he had been too focused to notice before.

There was another staircase that led to a floor above.

Chapter 700: Up the Stairs

Alex saw the stairway to the floor above and couldn't help but wonder if they sold Immortal rank items there.

Immortal rank... Alex hadn't seen anything other than skill books that had such a high rank before.

He had seen high grades for sure, but not high ranks.

Even he had made Immortal grade pills before. Making immortal rank pills, however, was just a dream.

Alex walked up the stairs and just before he reached the next floor, he was stopped by some staff.

"Sorry, fellow Daoist. You cannot go higher than this," the person said.

"I can't?" Alex felt disappointed. He had been expecting a bit too much. "I'm sorry, I thought there was more store up above."

"There is, but not for you," the staff said.

Alex was about to return when he stopped. "Pardon? Do you mean that I'm not allowed up there?" he asked.

"I mean no disrespect, Fellow Daoist, but only someone with a certain level of achievement or reputation can be allowed up there. Or, if you have some strong backing, we can take you on the merit of your backing's strength as well," the staff said.

Alex thought for a moment and said, "I'm a guest Elder at Flowing Brush sect. Does that count?"

"If you can bring back a letter of recommendation by Sect Master Qin, then we can let you enter," the man said.

"Good," Alex said, but he didn't leave. He wasn't going to waste time going back to the sect and coming back. He wanted to enter right now.

"What about Alchemy guild? Does it count as my backing?" Alex asked curiously.

"To a certain extent, yes," the man said. "But this time you will have to bring a high-ranking figure of the guild along with you."

"What counts as high ranking?" Alex asked. "Does this count?"

Alex brought out his True Heaven badge and showed it to the man. The man took a moment to see what it was, and when he did, his eyes went wide.

However, being a professional, he kept the look for maybe a second before removing it. Then, he put on a smile as he said, "Honored Guest, you should have begun with that."

Afterward, the man stepped to the side and left Alex to enter.

Alex entered the top of the stairs and looked around confusedly. There were no shops here at all. Then why did the staff say there was a store here? Alex couldn't make sense of anything.

He noticed a seating area next to a wall with a single person sitting on it. Aside from that, there was another staff guarding the door that lead to a room.

'Is that the store? A room?' Alex thought and walked up to the seating area to sit down.

He decided to wait and see what was going on for a few minutes, so he relaxed in the seating area next to the woman who didn't look like she wanted to speak at all.

After a few minutes, someone wearing Han family robes left the room and the staff by the door softly told the woman to enter.

Alex continued waiting, looking around at the mostly wooden pagoda, and started searching for a staircase.

'Seems like this is the final floor,' he thought. After waiting for maybe 5 or so minutes, the woman finally left the room.

"Honored guest, you may enter," the staff said to him. Alex nodded and entered through the door.

The interior of the room was small and cozy. There was an open window directly opposite the door. In the center of the room was a table surrounded on each side by two sofas, each of which was wide enough for 3 people to sit side to side.

The left sofa was empty, while the right one held an elderly woman with a wrinkled face and white hair.

She had a gentle smile on her face and a terrifying aura of a Saint realm expert.

Her white and blue robes were perfect with no creases at all.

"Ah, a young man. Please come and sit," she said.

Alex nodded with a smile and walked up to sit opposite her.

"May I know your name..." the woman's eyes drifted to his missing left hand and a curious look appeared on her face. "You wouldn't happen to be Yu Ming, would you? The guest elder of Flowing Brush sect, and a True Heaven Alchemist, Formation Master, and Talisman Expert."

"You know about me?" Alex asked with an unhidden tone of shock.

"It's my job to know about any and all potential customers," the woman said. "You happen to be one of the ones that are high in priority in this city."

"You flatter me a lot, senior," Alex said.

"I don't think you flatter yourself enough," the woman said. "It's not easy to do all of these things when you're not even 25."

Alex was genuinely shocked now. "You know my age too?" he asked with a serious face.

"And about your relationship with True Immortal talisman expert Hei Lin, amongst many other things," the old woman said and looked at the shocked Alex with a smile. "As I said, I need to remain informed about any potential customers."

"It seems like you went a bit overboard with that concept," Alex said.

"Don't worry, young man. Our customer's privacy is very important to us. The information we have, we won't give it to anyone," the woman said.

"You see, someone said the exact same thing to me once. A month later, I had a murder-hungry bastard kidnap me and nearly kill me in the middle of a forest. So, all your talk about privacy and protection doesn't mean shit to me," Alex said and looked at her.

The woman gave a surprised look. "I can promise our stor—"

"How did you find that information?" Alex asked, not giving her the chance to speak.

"Any information is available to buy at certain places," the woman said.

'An intelligence agency huh? Qin Shan did speak to be about those once,' he thought.

"Anyway, let's forget about all this," Alex said. "I came here because I wanted to buy something, but I don't see a store. Was I misled?"

"No you were not, honored guest," the old woman said. "I am the store."

The old woman brought out a few storage bags from her robes and placed them in front of Alex.

With just a simple look, Alex could tell that these were high-grade storage bags, capable of holding at least 10 cubic meters of space.

Some of these may even hold as much as his own storage ring, at least how much of it was available right now.

The old woman brought out two cups and started pouring some steaming, light green liquid into the cups.

"Please have some tea. It's made with the best ingredients our chefs could find," the woman said.

"Thank you," Alex said and drank the tea. As soon as the tea entered his throat, Alex could tell how amazing it was.

Within seconds, he felt like his mind was clear and awake. All the anger and annoyance he had been feeling was gone within moments and he was left with a fresh mind.

"My apologies, I forgot to ask you your name earlier," Alex said.

"It's alright. I am Ga Xueyuan," the old woman said.

"It's good to meet you, senior Ga," Alex said. "So, let's get to business please."

"Yes, what is it that you want to buy from me today?" the woman asked as she brought out some items from her bag.

"A Saint rank sword? Some talisman designs, Pill recipes, formation blueprint, maybe a prosthetic arm? What is it?" Ga Xueyuan asked as she brought forward all the different items.

The moment the items fell into Alex's eyes, they started shining with the bright light of wanting them.

"How do you have Saint rank items here? I thought that was for the floor below," Alex said.

"No, only Common and True rank items are found below. Saint experts don't like wasting time with normal store clerks you see, so I deal with them," The woman said.

"I see," Alex said. "Well, you have some amazing items, but that is not what I am here for."

"I am actually looking for a recipe to form pills," Alex said.

"Pill forming recipes? I would have guessed you to already had one given your ability to create Heaven grade pills," the old woman said.

Alex shook his head. "It's a low-tier technique and is unusable now," he said. "So I was hoping you had one, hopefully, an immortal rank too."

The woman looked at him for a moment and at the different items below. Once she became sure that he wasn't buying any of them, she reluctantly reached into one of her bags and pulled out a book.

Once out, she handed the book to Alex. Alex took it and was confused.

"Why is this not sealed?" he asked.

"There's no need to," the woman said. "You will find that Immortal grade skills of any kind are quite hard to remember, let alone learn."

"I see, so you are confident I will neither be able to learn it in the period of time it's in my hand," Alex said.

"That's exactly it," the old woman said.

Alex shook his head and looked down to check the book he had gotten. The outer cover looked quite good, almost pristine.

The yellow color seemed to be a choice rather than the book being old too. Then Alex turned the page and looked at the title of the technique.

[Profound Revolutions of Myriad Combinations]