

## Alchemy 731

Chapter 731: Wei Ruoran

Alex arrived at the garden in the backyard and saw the Princess' two early Saint realm guards.

But the princess wasn't around them at all. Alex walked up to them, and only then did he notice the veiled princess in the distance.

He wanted to talk to her, but he saw her talking with an old man that limped a little as he walked.

Alex waited for the princess to finish talking with that man.

After a few minutes, the princess walked away and returned back towards the table to see Alex sitting there.

"Good morning, princess," Alex said.

"Good morning," the princess said. "What are you doing here? I thought you would be by your clinic by now."

"I can go there any time I want. There's not much pressure anymore," Alex said.

"Well, you do look quite free," the princess said.

Alex looked towards the old man who kept limping as he walked around the flowers. "Who's he?" Alex asked. "He doesn't seem like a disciple or a member of the family."

"Who? Ruoran? He's a disciple. He just doesn't bother with it, that's all," the princess said.

"I'm surprised he gets to touch the flowers," Alex said. "I thought you said the gardener was quite strict about people messing with his flowers."

The princess chuckled a bit. "Yes, aside from him, no one else is allowed to mess with the flower," the princess said.

"Then— wait, is he the gardener?" Alex asked.

The princess nodded.

"Woah!" Alex thought. He had been planning to learn about taking care of plants for a while now, but he just didn't have the time.

"Do you think he would teach me about gardening if I asked?" he asked the princess.

"Is that what you came to ask of me today?" the princess asked with a smile.

"Oh right, I nearly forgot," Alex said. "I came to ask you if you would be willing to teach me the poison arts."

"The poison arts?" the princess' voice got serious. "You do know that it is the royal family's secret right?"

"I know," Alex said hurriedly. "And I don't expect you to teach me everything. I'm just asking for a few lessons to get started, that's all."

"I see, I will think about it," the princess said.

"And at the same time, can you get him to teach me about gardening too? As an Alchemist, I really need to know more about these things," Alex said.

"Why don't you talk to him yourself?" the princess asked.

Alex thought for a moment and nodded. "You're right, I should."

He stood up and walked towards the gardener. "Greetings senior," Alex bowed a little to him.

The man was checking some of the flowers when Alex arrived, so he didn't speak for a while. Only after he was done looking through them did he finally turn around.

"Who are you?" the man asked.

"My name is Yu Ming. I am the Royal family's Alchemist," Alex said. "I was hoping to ask a favor of you."

"What is it?" the man asked in a grumpy voice.

"Would you mind teaching me about gardening?" Alex asked. "I would really appreciate it if you taught it to me."

"What use do I have for your appreciation? Go away, don't bother me," the gardener said.

"Please, senior Ruoran, I really need someone to teach me about growing plants, and who better than the royal gardener?" Alex said.

"Go away kid, I don't have the time," the man said and tried to move to the next plant.

"Ruoran, you would do good not to call his majesty's guest a 'kid'," the princess spoke as she too had walked there.

"What? His majesty's guest? Seriously?" the gardener looked to the princess in shock.

The princess nodded.

The gardener mulled for a moment and shook his head. "No, I still won't teach you," he said.

"What can I do to make you teach me?" Alex asked.

"What can you do?" the man asked.

"I'm an Alchemist so I can make pills," Alex said and the princess nodded behind him.

"I'm also a True Heaven rank Formation master, and Talisman maker," Alex said, which surprised the Princess.

"You are?" the princess asked with a look of surprise.

"Of course, did you not know?" Alex asked.

The princess shook her head.

"I thought you would have every piece of information on my background before I came here," Alex said.

"You are the Emperor's guest. I wouldn't dare do anything that would bring your ire," the princess said.

"You're an Alchemist?" the gardener asked.

"Yes," Alex said, seeing that he might be going somewhere after all.

"I am an Alchemist too," the man said. "Or... at least I was, until..."

"Until?" Alex waited for him to speak.

"He doesn't like talking about whatever happened," the princess said.

"Leave me alone," the gardener said as his mood was suddenly ruined and he walked away.

Seeing his face, Alex didn't want to talk about it anymore and let him go.

"What's wrong with him? Is he injured or something? He keeps limping," Alex said.

"He was injured because of a stupid decision," the princess said. "Sigh, if only he didn't do that."

"What did he do?" Alex asked.

The princess then started telling him about the gardener.

Wei Ruoran was born to a distant cousin of the emperor and had thus lost his royalty. However, that didn't stop him from being one of the most talented individuals in the whole empire.

A century ago, he was one of the most talented youth in the empire. In fact, most would say he was the most talented.

Ever since young, his talent for cultivation was high, but his love was for the plants. His mother, the princess, was an alchemist and as such had started a little garden in her own backyard.

Ruoran used to help his mother take care of the plants in the garden and as such, he gained his love for plantation and gardening.

Even when he grew, he became an Alchemist and spent most of the time just growing ingredients.

Most who heard that would consider him to be wasting his time with the plants, but the royal family knew different.

They could see that he had a talent for it. Any plant he was given would grow without a doubt. Any plant would blossom its flowers to him.

It was like the plants loved him and always grew whenever he took care of them.

They suspected it had something to do with his constitution, but there was no hint of it at all.

Even when he did spend his time in the garden, his cultivation speed did not drop. In just a few dozen years, he went on to reach the peak of the True Realm.

Then, one day, on a stormy night, he decided to break through.

Ruoran made his way up the mountain of the disciple's area and decided to break through in the middle of the storm.

At the peak, he was in the middle of breaking through when the lightning struck him and he went through Qi deviation.

The cultivation base he had worked so hard for was ruined, and he fell down to the True King's realm.

His leg where the lightning hit was also injured, and no matter what he did, it never healed itself.

The people only found out about it all after the incident, but everyone who cared about him was furious at his stupidity to try and break through in the middle of the storm.

Ruoran didn't speak any longer of what happened or why he went stupid. Since that day, he never broke through again.

He decided to become a gardener for the royal family and live out the rest of his life like that.

Alex heard it all and a curious expression appeared on his face. "I will go and talk to him again," he said.

"I don't think he will want to," The princess said. "He isn't the easiest person to talk to."

"I will still try," Alex said.

"What about the poison training?" the princess asked.

"Next time," Alex said as he ran away. "This one is more important."

He quickly returned back to the garden, but he found that Ruoran was on his way toward the giant mountain.

He was making his way to behind the mountain where the royal disciples stayed in.

"Senior Ruoran, stop," Alex shouted as he made his way halfway up the mountain where Ruoran was at.

He was walking up slowly so he hadn't made it very far up by the time Alex got there.

Ruoran turned around and his grumpy face turned even grumpier. "What is it now? I thought I made my intentions clear?" the man said.

"I know," Alex said. "But I just heard about your story from the princess."

"My story? So what? Did you come here to call me stupid too? Go ahead, everyone else does," the man said.

"No, I'm not going to call you stupid," Alex said with bright wide eyes.

"You still think it on the inside," Ruoran said.

"No," Alex said. "You're not stupid. There never was a storm when you went to break through, was there?"

Ruoran's face changed. "How do you know?" he asked.

"I know because you are good with plants," Alex said.

Ruoran's face changed to confusion. "What does that have to do with anything?" he asked.

"It has everything to do with the plants," Alex said. "Since young, you learned about the plants and were deeply interested in them. As you got older, you learned more and more."

"Then... one day you learned about them so much, that you learned a Dao about the plants," Alex said.

"Dao?" Ruoran's face changed.

"Yes, a Dao," Alex said. "Which is why I know that there was no storm when you went to break through to the Saint realm."

"No, instead you created one," Alex said. "The lightning that struck you was your Tribulation lightning, wasn't it?"

## Chapter 732: A Path Ahead

"I am a little confused about what you are saying, but yes, it did indeed happen the way you said," Ruoran said.



"I was trying to break through to the Saint realm, so I thought I would go to a secluded location and do it. However, once I tried to, I felt like I was gone for a few hours like I had fallen asleep."

"However, it had only been a few minutes from what I could tell. Next thing I know, there's a storm brewing above me, threatening to destroy me."

"It struck not once, but twice. I defended myself the first time, but the second time, the lightning was stronger than me and I was injured," Ruoran said.

"Why didn't you tell anyone?" Alex asked.

"I tried," Ruoran said. "They thought I was making excuses."

"Do they not know about your Dao?" Alex asked.

"No," Ruoran said. "Even I only learned in the last few decades that what I had was a Dao. I don't even know much about it as information on it is hard to find."

"I understand," Alex said. Then, he looked through Ruoran's body once more. "Your leg is injured. Can it not be healed?"

"I don't know," Ruoran said. "No pills work on me for some reason."

"Weird," Alex thought. 'I will have to ask Shen Jing if getting hit by tribulation lightning results in such injuries.'

"Wait," Alex said. "Your wound shouldn't be stopping you from cultivating though. You didn't completely lose your cultivation base after all."

"I... I don't know what is going on anymore," Ruoran said. "I just can't seem to breakthrough. Every time I try, I just end up in a pool of cold sweat."

Alex thought for a while when he realized what the problem was. "Oh," he said. "Your inner demon must be incredibly hard to get through."

"Inner demon?" Ruoran asked with an inquisitive look.

"Let us settle somewhere. I will explain to you everything I can," Alex said.

Ruoran took him to a spot on the top of the mountain where an area was open with not a single tree.

"This is where I was struck with lightning. This emptiness is a constant reminder of my life now," Ruoran said.

Alex looked around and was surprised to find not a single sign of life in the 10 meter area.

There was a small hut in the center and Ruoran took Alex inside. There was a single bed, but Ruoran brought out a small chair from his storage bag and offered it to Alex.

"My apologies, people don't usually visit me," Ruoran said.

"It's fine," Alex said. "There is no point in having anything more than this as a cultivator."

"So, would you mind explaining what is happening exactly? From the start please," Ruoran said.

"I will, but in exchange, I hope you reconsider my request. I really do want you to teach me about growing plants," Alex said.

"I will," Ruoran said seriously with not a sense of grumpiness in his voice.

Alex nodded and started explaining everything he knew about Dao, Inner Demon, and Lightning Tribulation.

He told Ruoran that heaven itself was judging him every time he was going to progress. It was putting obstacles in his way to stop him from getting better.

Ruoran nodded as it all made sense.

"I was troubled with Inner Demon too and lost a bit of my cultivation base about 5 months ago. It wasn't until a while ago that I went for it after preparing and managed to break through," Alex said.

"How did you prepare against something you don't even know is there?" Ruoran asked.

"It is there, and the way to prepare for it is simple," Alex said. "You prepare for anything and everything it could use against you."

Alex wondered just what could this man's insecurity be when he realized that almost everything that happened in this man's life was probably some sort of insecurity.

A man that was born to the royal family, but was not a royal himself.

A talented cultivator that wasted his talent taking care of flowers.

One of the strongest of the younger generation member has to now watch those that were weaker than him become his senior.

A person that was deemed an idiot by everyone for a thing he didn't even do.

A man that was terrified of breaking through for the fear of losing his other normal leg and half of his cultivation base.

That were a lot of problems that Ruoran himself would have to tackle one at a time.

Alex made him do the same thing Shen Jing made him do: write a list of his problems and deal with them one by one.

Alex helped him deal with a bit of them, but Ruoran would have to tackle most of them on his own.

"I will come back on the day you return to become a True Emperor," Alex said. "After that, I hope you will teach me about growing plants."

"You believe that I can do it?" Ruoran asked.

"Of course, you can," Alex said. "Trust in yourself. That's how you're going to fight your inner demon."

"I'll let you be for now," Alex said and left Ruoran alone to mull over the conversation he just had.

Knowing what was wrong with him and knowing that there was a way to fight it rekindled a fire that was deep inside Ruoran that had been slumbering for a century now.

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It had been a few days since Alex talked to Ruoran, but he hadn't met him after that.

Alex took up on the princess' offer to teach him about the poisons in the morning. So, every morning for one hour exactly, he learned about the different types of poisons and how to make them.

She taught him about the various different types of poisons. Some harmed the body, some harmed the mind, and some harmed the spirit itself.

There were poisons that killed someone, poisons that made people unable to use Qi, and poisons that stopped one's spiritual sense.

In a sense, anything that had a negative impact on a body was poison for it.

It didn't take long for Alex to realize how easily he could harm someone if he managed to turn the poisons into pills that were extra effective.

The training only lasted a week or so but Alex got what he had been looking for from this training.

A path ahead.

If he followed the path, even on his own, he would surely do well and get better at it.

A day or two after the training ended, Shen Jing returned for another day of training, and in that moment Alex asked him about Ruoran's injuries.

"An injury from Tribulation lightning? Those can be healed," Shen Jing said.

"But senior Ruoran says that no matter how many pills he ate, his legs never healed," Alex said.

"Well, since he was on the verge of becoming a Saint realm expert and all of his Qi has changed to Saint Qi, it will be impossible for True pills to work."

"If he wants to heal, he would need Saint rank pills. I doubt anyone would want to waste that on someone like him," Shen Jing said.

"Ah, I see," Alex said. "So he needs a pill from a higher rank, huh?"

"That or he needs to go through the tribulation again and beat it," Shen Jing said.

"Why would he need to do that?" Alex asked.

"Because he would get his leg healed that way," Shen Jing said.

"What? You can heal wounds by breaking through in a lightning tribulation?" Alex asked with surprise. If that was true then there was no need for him to try and make his healing pill.

He could just silently train until he reached Saint realm and he would get his arm back.

"No, no, no," Shen Jing quickly corrected him. "You will only get back what you lost to the tribulation. Any other problems that occurred that were not caused by the tribulation are not touched."

"Oh," Alex said as his excitement dwindled to nothing.

"Don't worry, you'll do fine," Shen Jing said.

Alex nodded.

"Listen," he then suddenly said. "I need to talk to you about something."

"What is it?" Alex asked.

"I will be leaving this continent very soon," Shen Jing said. "I just wanted to tell you in case you suddenly don't see me anymore."

Chapter 733: Another Path

"You're leaving the continent? Why?" Alex asked. This was a bit too sudden from Alex's perspective.

"I... am going home," Shen Jing said.

"Home?" Alex asked curiously.

"Yes," Shen Jing said.

"I thought you said this place was your home," Alex said.

"It is, but if you remember, I told you I wasn't born here," Shen Jing said. "I'm going back to where I was born."

"Where is this home?" Alex asked.

Shen Jing put on a nostalgic smile as he remembered his family who must be missing him a lot.

"It's a place called the Land of the Blessed Sun. It's a tacky name, I know, but it fits the place," Shen Jing said.

"I kinda like the name," Alex said. After all, the place had the word 'sun' in it. "Can I visit there someday?"

"Of course," Shen Jing said. "Someday, I assume you will be invited even after I tell them about you."

"About me? Why would you tell them about me?" Alex asked worriedly.

"Because of how special you are. I doubt they won't want to see you after I gush about you."

Alex didn't know what to say, so he changed the topic. "What continent is this Land of the Blessed sun in?" Alex asked.

"I'm sure you will figure it out on your own in due time," Shen Jing said.

"Are you leaving for good or are you going to return?" Alex asked after a considerable amount of time.

"Oh no, it's going to be a short visit," Shen Jing said. However, his face twisted to show a grimacing smile as he said, "but what I consider short is usually a decade to two at least."

"Decades, huh?" Alex said. "I can't believe you would make such rushed decisions for something that would take decades. I wonder if I will feel the same sort of dissonance with time once I reach the Saint realm."

Shen Jing made a weird face. "Who said this was a rushed decision?" he asked. "In fact, it was a delayed decision."

"Delayed? You were supposed to leave earlier?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Shen Jing said. "I made plans for leaving once I thought you died in the Demon Realm. I was supposed to leave a while ago. But then I found out you didn't die there, and instead stuck around for a while longer to teach you what I could before leaving."

"When do you leave then?" Alex asked.

"Within a year," Shen Jing said.

Alex thought for a moment and asked, "if you really are going to leave then would you mind telling me what your cultivation base is?"

Alex had tried to figure out Shen Jing's cultivation base, but he still couldn't figure it out at all. He was sure it was at least in the Saint Soul based on the fact that the Emperor who was likely in Saint Core was afraid of him, but that still didn't tell Alex anything.

"How about this? Once I return, I will answer every question you could possibly have about me," Shen Jing said.

"But that would mean I will have to wait 20 years just to find out," Alex said.



"Don't worry, as you cultivate, time will go by in a flash."

The two of them trained along with Pearl for a bit longer and Shen Jing returned.

Alex went back to the palace around late afternoon and was about to go to the Alchemy room when a servant found him.

"Senior Ruoran is looking for me? Where?" Alex asked hurriedly after getting the information.

"The garden, sir alchemist," the servant said and Alex took off. Within a minute, he was back in the garden and found Ruoran by one of the flowers, checking it.

Alex walked up to him and before he could say anything, Ruoran started speaking.

"The Bluethorn Dahlia is notorious for requiring a lot of nutrients and water from the surrounding. So, where ever it is planted, you can expect an area around it where it is near impossible for anything else to grow."

"The Gripping Cactus on the other hand doesn't need as many nutrients to grow. Instead, it absorbs water from the surroundings and creates nutrients in its own body to grow."

"However, the Gripping Cactus is notorious for having thorns that release a rather foul-smelling scent. Fortunately, the Bluethorn Dahlia's flower's sweet scent perfectly masks the foul smell and even compliments it."

"As such, when you plant them side by side, neither of the plants affect each other, and both of them can become greater than the sum of their two parts," Ruoran said.

Alex smiled as he heard and said, "That sounds ingenious. Taking two non-conflicting plants and putting them together to negate the negative aspect of both of the plants using the positive aspects of another."

"Yes," Ruoran said. "Gardening, or rather, Planting is all about that. Whenever you want to grow something, you look at the positive and negative aspects of the plants."

"If you have a lot of areas, you don't really need to consider anything other than giving enough nutrients to the plant. However, when you have a small area, like the edges of a garden, or the formations for Alchemy gardens, you have to be mindful about everything, and use your knowledge of the plants to the best of your advantage."

Alex nodded as he heard that and smiled at Ruoran. "I guess congratulations are in order," he said. "Congratulations for reaching the True Emperor realm, senior Ruoran."

Ruoran smiled. "Thank you, and call me brother from now on. You have helped me way too much to call me just a senior."

"How about I call you a teacher then? For teaching me about plants?" Alex asked, but Ruoran cringed a bit. "Very well, thank you for accepting my offer to teach me, brother Ruoran."

Ruoran finally smiled and moved along. "How much do you know about the plants, about growing them?" he asked.

Alex remembered back to his days on the farm, and how his father would tend his crops. His father taught him a bit about farming, but he never gave a hands-on experience to him.

So, it wasn't too far to say that Alex was a complete novice when it came to this topic.

"I would say I do not know anything," he said to Ruoran.

"A newbie, huh? Well, then I guess I will have to start from the beginning then," Ruoran said and started teaching.

"First of all, there are different categories and subcategories of plants. Let's start with the most common ones," Ruoran said and started explaining what he knew about plants.

The whole day, he went around the garden teaching the very basics of everything while giving examples along the way.

Alex matched the knowledge with his own knowledge from back when his mother taught him about plants. There wasn't much information in his mind from back then, but it still helped quite a bit.

That night, Alex returned back to his room and sat down to cultivate while recalling everything he was taught.

What he was taught was simple knowledge, but that knowledge helped him open up another path for his future.

Another path that if he went along, he was sure he would master in no time.

Chapter 734: Spirit Foods Competition

"22 Thousand True Spirit stones, going once."

"22 Thousand True Spirit stones, going twice."

"22 Thousand True Spirit stones, going thrice."

"Sold!"

The auctioneer lady stuck the gavel and announced the product sold.

"Thank you everyone for coming. That was the last item on our auction today. There will be another auction in a month's time. Please come by again," the auctioneer lady said and waited until everyone left.

Alex left out of the auction house with a disappointed look.

His Yang body was getting worse by the day and his hopes of finding any sort of Yin treasure were getting worse and worse.

He walked by the streets of the capital and saw the influx of people that had arrived here to see the competition that was held for Spirit Foods.

'It's already been a year since the Formations competition huh?' Alex thought. 'Time really does go by quickly when one cultivates.'

In the last 7 months, Alex had broken through twice and had reached True King 3rd realm. In the next two or three months, he should be able to break through once more.

Pearl on the other hand had broken through twice too, but there was nearly 6 months gap in between each of his breakthroughs.

Part of the problem was obviously Pearl's slow cultivation speed, but part of the problem was also the fact that he hadn't managed to find any beast cores to consume, which had slowed him down.

'If only we could go to the mountains to fight and grow again,' Alex thought. However, he shook his head.

He had a job here in the capital. He was assigned to the royal family to make pills and he wouldn't return until he was done here.

'Just one more year,' he thought to himself.

He ignored the crowd of people talking about Spirit foods and made his way to the Alchemy guild.

There was a long list of lines and Alex found the shortest one to queue in.

As he waited for the line to move, a hand suddenly fell on his shoulders. Alex turned around to see who it was and saw Zhou Ren.

"Brother Ren," Alex said. "It's good to see you again."

"Brother Yu, it's been a while, hasn't it?" Zhou Ren said. "When was it I saw you last time? Oh, that's right, back when you gave away all the pastes recipes for free."

'Does he hold a grudge against me for that?' Alex wondered. Alex thought he hadn't done anything directly to the father and son, but who knew how the elites took to even the slightest damage to their pride.

"What are you doing here? Are you looking for a pill? Tell me what it is, and I will make it for you," Zhou Ren said.

"It's fine, brother Ren. I'm not looking for any pill. I'm just here to talk to the receptionist about some ingredients," Alex said.

"What ingredients?" Zhou Ren inquired.

"It's something only the staff can help me with," Alex said.

"Do you want to come with me to the back? There are people there that can do similar things too. The line in here is so long," Zhou Ren said.

Alex's eyes narrowed a bit in thought. He was friendly with the staff back in the Dawnspring city, so he could ask the ones in the back about anything.

But in the capital, where everything was so strict, he wasn't sure if he should do something out of line here.

"That's not the staff's task though," Alex said.

"They will bend a rule or two from time to time," Zhou Ren said. "Especially if I show them my True Heaven rank badge."

"Hmm..." Alex thought for a moment. "Well, if they will do that then I should do just that."

Alex walked out of the queue and started walking towards the back of the Alchemy Guild.

"Hey, not so fast. I need to show my badge to get you—" Zhou Ren's words stuck in his mouth when Alex brought out his own badge to wear.

His eyes went wide as he couldn't possibly correlate a True Heaven rank badge with someone like Alex.

"Where did you get that badge?" Zhou Ren asked. "Do you know how much trouble you could cause to the person whose badge this is?"

"Problem? This is my own badge, Brother Zhou," Alex said.

"No way," Zhou Ren said. "You're not an Alchemist."

"The badge says so," Alex said and continued walking.

"Is that really not a stolen badge?" Zhou Ren asked.

"Of course not," Alex said.

Alex walked up to the staff members that were in charge of handing the mission's ending.

"Greetings, Brother Yu," one of the staff members that recognized him greeted him quickly.

"Hello," Alex put on an amicable smile. "I needed to buy something but the line outside is very long. Would it be alright if I had you guys look something up for me?"

"Sure, Brother Yu. What would you like for us to search?" the staff member asked.

"Is there any treasure in the guild with a lot of Yin?" he asked.

The staff checked through the records and came up with a few names.

Alex mulled over the list and chose the ones that would actually affect him somewhat.

"This, this, and this," he quickly chose the ingredients. "As for the money, please take it from my account."

"Yes, brother Yu," the staff said and quickly finished the transaction.

"Thank you," Alex said and turned away.

Zhou Ren watched the whole thing with a shocked expression as he finally realized that Alex truly was a True Heaven-ranked alchemist.

"I don't understand," he said. "Why would a True Heaven alchemist ever bother with the common folks and stoop so low to treat them himself?"

"It kind of felt like it was my responsibility," Alex said. "After I got the recipes from the Demon Realm, I realized that it could treat so many people with such little resources."

"So, I started practicing and got good at it. However, since I was the only one who knew how to make it, I didn't think anyone else could do it," Alex said.

"Well, that went in a different direction very quickly, didn't it? If you and your father had asked just 20 minutes earlier that day, you would've likely gotten all the recipes," Alex said.

Zhou Ren slowly got angry as he heard Alex talk. To him, Alex's words sounded like mockery. He felt like Alex was telling him they failed.

As a member of the Zhou family, he couldn't bear being a failure.

"What's the highest Harmony pill you have ever made?" Zhou Ren asked.

"Sorry?" Alex was confused at the sudden question. "Highest harmony? Let's see. It was a 63% Body Relaxing pill." He wasn't stupid enough to answer truthfully just because he was asked.

"63% huh? That's not bad. If you take part in the Alchemy competition, you should be able to get top 5 if you reach that high," Zhou Ren said.

"I, myself, can reach 65% consistently. I even reached 67% on a pill not so long ago. Of course, the Alchemy competition is more than just making the best pill. There is so much more that goes into it," Zhou Ren said.

Alex nodded as he heard it, but there wasn't any need to hear about it at all. After all...

"I don't plan on joining the Alchemy competition," Alex said.

"What?" Zhou Ren's face sank with displeasure. "Are you getting scared? If you are a man you need to fight adversity with courage, not fear. So what if you won't come first? Or even second. It's all about standing up and taking a stance."

Alex didn't say anything. He was afraid after all. Not of the competition or coming last.

He was afraid that if whatever was going on with his body went on forever, then he wouldn't be able to make pills for a long time and would have to start all over again, just like his master did.



He would have to change his entire 8 year's worth of experience in Alchemy just so he could make a decent Common Rank pill again.

He didn't want that. So, the moment his job in the Royal family was done, he was planning on leaving the capital.

He wasn't sure where he would go, but what he was sure of was that he would do anything to get it fixed.

Even if that meant going directly to the Beast realm to see if they had any clue about what was going on.

"I'm sorry, brother Ren, but I really don't have any interest in the Alchemy competition," Alex said. "But I will wish you good luck right now."

"You still have 1 year to make your choice. Don't be too hasty," Zhou Ren said.

Alex nodded just to appease him. "I will think about it carefully then," he said.

"Good, that is the least you can do as a True Heaven rank alchemist," Zhou Ren said. "Now, if you will excuse me, I came here to find out information about the competition next year."

Alex let him be but stuck around long enough to hear about the date the competition was taking place in.

'It will be just around the time I am supposed to leave. Maybe I can spare a week?' Alex thought but quickly shook his head.

'I can't waste any time,' he thought. He looked at the 3 Yin ingredients he had been lucky enough to find and decided to go back to the palace and cultivate with them to temporarily fix his body.

## Chapter 735: New Alchemists

Alex got busy with life. For the next 2 months, he focused his time on gardening and poison making.

Ruoran had given him a small area of the garden to do in it as he pleased. So, Alex had been growing some special plants that would one day give True rank ingredients for Alchemy.

Aside from that, he was continuously making pills for the Royal family, but there was less and less need for it.

Shen Jing had visited less and less as it was time for him to leave, and Alex's cultivation was getting slower once again because of it.

Thanks to his yang-filled body, his Alchemy was regressing as well. By now, he was only making 2 or 3 Immortal rank pills a day because of how hard it was for him to maintain his body.

Most of the time, even with his Heat and Heat conduction Dao, it was getting hard to exactly set the temperature of the flame straight.

His yang energy would always fluctuate, and so he couldn't even adapt to it to increase the temperature just as.

He was afraid that soon he wouldn't be able to make Immortal rank pills despite his recipes.

Treasures with Yin and Yang were just hard to get by, so Alex didn't have many options even in the capital. Not even Shen Jing had Yin treasures. Although, Shen Jing never really had anything.

He never took any flying boats, or weapons, or armors, or anything of his own and always relied on his body and cultivation.

Alex felt a little weird that a strong person like Shen Jing had nothing with him, but he figured it was just the way Shen Jing liked to live.

The princess did mention something about a snowy area in the eastern mountains way in the east towards the ocean where he could find some Yin treasures.

She had said that really great Yin treasures came from there. Alex wanted to go there, but the princess also let him know how treacherous the place was.

Apparently, it was so cold there that even breathing became hard due to the air condensing on the floor.

Only those with a really strong cultivation base like the people in the Saint realm went there. But even then, they had to be extra prepared.

Alex decided to check that place out right after he left the capital.

He didn't want Yin treasures. He wanted to fix his condition. Yin treasures were just a temporary remedy, but not the actual solution to his situation.

He wished there was a tree like the one that evolved his body but of the Yin variety. That would certainly help him a lot.

Alex continued his day normally until one day there was a knock on the door.

Alex opened the door and found Shurin standing outside.

"Hey, Shurin. I haven't seen you in a while," Alex said. After Alex returned back and secluded himself in the palace for the majority of the days, Shurin was sent back to do whatever she wanted.

She would only be called from time to time when Alex needed to buy some ingredients.

"The princess is asking you to visit her in the garden. There are some guests she wants to introduce you to," Shurin said.

"Oh, what guests?" Alex asked.

Shurin shook her head. "I don't recognize them, sorry," she said.

Alex nodded and walked along with her. When he reached the garden, Alex saw quite a few tables lined up that usually weren't in the garden.

There were quite a few princes and princesses sitting there, talking with a lot of different people he hadn't seen before.

Although, that was not necessarily true. After a few seconds, he did see a girl that he recognized.

'Xue Meirong,' he thought to himself when he saw her. This was a girl he had only seen once in the Demon realm as he had with all the others when she stood around the House of the Undying.

She was wearing the same robe back then as right now, a robe with green and pink, giving off an impression of a blossomed lotus.

That would make sense as she was part of the Falling Lotus sect. Next to her was a relatively old man with a similar robe, but his cultivation base left Alex stunned as he was in the Saint realm. Quite high at that too.

He had a suspicion as to who that was, but he didn't dare guess it right now.

"You're here," The princess said and beckoned him.

"You did call for me," Alex said as he sat down next to her on the empty seat. "What's going on? Some sort of event?"

"Yes," the princess said. "I want you to meet these people."

The princess introduced him to every single person there, and Alex greeted them all respectfully. Just as he had expected, the man by Xue Meirong was Xue Mufan, the Saint rank alchemist most well known in the empire aside from the Zhou family's Zhou Zirong.

"And this is one of the empire's current best young generation members, Xue Meirong," Princess Xumei said.

"Greetings, sister Meirong," Alex said.

"And finally, this is Yu Ming, our temporary Royal Alchemist," the princess introduced himself to the others. "The person who you will be replacing."

Alex's ears perked up. "Replacing?" he asked softly to the princess.

"Of course," the princess said. "You didn't think we wouldn't prepare until you left, did you?"

Alex gave a rueful smile and shook his head.

"Anyway, these are your replacements, and I would like to ask you to help us choose from them," the princess said.

"Including senior Xue?" Alex asked with a bit of surprise.

"Haha, no. Senior Xue came here with his daughter. He isn't looking to replace you," the princess said.

"Young man, what rank of Alchemist are you?" Xue Mufan suddenly asked.

"I am a True Heaven alchemist, senior," Alex said and brought out his True Heaven badge.

"And you look so young," the man said with a bit of surprise in his eyes. "Are you even 30?"

"No," Alex shook his head.

"Wow, then you will be able to take part in 3 different Alchemy competitions before you aren't allowed to. I see a great life ahead of you, young man," Xue Mufan said.

"Thank you, senior," Alex said.

"Senior Xue, my father is looking for you. Shurin, show senior to the Palace hall," Xumei ordered Shurin who was nearby.

Xue Mufan gave a smile and left, not before looking towards his daughter and giving her an encouraging look.

Alex looked back at the group and was now confused as to what to do. He had always been the one being tested and had never given others some test.

He thought for a few seconds and brought out a talisman. The talisman recorded one of his improved pills, but the pill was one of the more common pills that already had a good enough recipe.

He handed it to the princess and told her to get it replicated a bunch for the test.

Without hesitation, the princess ordered someone to do it immediately. At the same time, Alex had her bring 5 sets of ingredients for the same recipe per examinee.

Then, he started speaking to the group.

"The test is simple. I have a recipe in my hand for the Disciple Ascendance pill. I'm sure you guys are all familiar with the pill and its recipe, but this one is an improved version that should be able to help you all a lot."

"In a few minutes, you will all be given 5 sets of ingredients. Whoever can make the best pill in an hour wins," Alex said.

"So simple?" the princess asked.

"This should be enough," Alex said.

Soon the ingredients were here and everyone was handed the recipe as well. Some of the people said they didn't need the recipe as they already knew the recipe by heart after making it hundreds of times.

Alex didn't bother explaining and let them do what they wanted to do.

"You have 20 minutes to read the recipe and learn it as well as prepare. After that, you will have one hour to make the pills," Alex said.

"There are Alchemy rooms over there, and you will make your pills there. If you want, you can go ahead right now and save yourself 20 minutes."

#### Chapter 736: Disturbance

"Is there a reason why you made the test so simple?" the princess asked while waiting for the alchemists to finish making the pill.

"Well, part of the reason is that you didn't give me time to prepare," Alex said. "Had you told me you were doing this, I could have prepared much better."

"How could you not know this was happening? This is the news of the capital right now," the princess said.

"Uhh... is it? I haven't left my room in some time now," Alex said while shaking his head.

"You need to go out some more," the princess said. "So, what's the other part of the reason?"

"The other part is that I'm looking for 3 things in the new alchemist," Alex said.

"What 3 things?" the princess asked.

"Well, I'm looking for tale—"

Alex's words stopped midspeech when he sensed something and turned his head to the right towards the palace.

The princess looked confused and looked towards the palace but she couldn't understand why she was looking there.

"What's there?" she asked, but Alex wasn't hearing anything. He was focused on the tiny pulse that he had felt just now and was wondering what it was.

He felt it once more in his chest and couldn't help but put on a serious face. 'What is happening?' he thought and continued looking in the direction as his senses told him something was up.

It wasn't just him that was having such a reaction. Both the Emperor and Xue Mufan had stopped speaking with each other and were sensing something.

"Is someone comprehending the Dao?" the Emperor asked.

"Doesn't feel like it," Mufan said and continued looking in all directions, trying to find exactly where this feeling was coming from.

Deep in the Fu family's Ancestral home, Fu Tao's grandfather was woken up from his deep cultivation once again as a feeling came to him again.



The last time this had happened was a decade ago when he had felt something from the north and had sent many of the younger generations into the Beast realm.

He had inadvertently killed the majority of the last generation of youngsters by making everyone agree to send them in the first place.

His older brother had gone to the other side and started an Empire there, so he knew one could go through now. Not only that, even his own grandson had returned with a couple from the other side.

So, he knew traversing was safe. Still, he didn't dare think about sending any more people through the Beast realm again.

'I don't know what is happening out there, but I'm staying out of it,' the old man thought and stayed secluded.

Zhou Tianqiu noticed the disturbance too, and he too couldn't tell what the cause was.

Shanggaun Quan felt his Spear Qi waver when the disturbance reached him. "What's that?" he wondered as he was unable to pinpoint the disturbance or even give it a general direction.

Han Hongqi was training his physique when he too sensed the disturbance and wondered what it was.

The Broken Ravine sect, the Glory's edge sect, the Heaven's Peak school, the Falling Lotus sect, the Lu clan, the Shen clan, the Zhou clan, the Jin clan, the Han clan, the Fu clan, and the Song clan.

Every single one of these locations had their secluded Saint realm cultivators riled up from the disturbance that was happening and no one could tell what it was.

Most of the Saint realm cultivators that were in the Saint Condensation realm didn't even notice it at all.

Those that did, did not have the perception to notice where it was happening.

The only one that was perceptive enough was Alex for some reason, and he too could only tell the direction at best, not the distance.

Alex continued staring at the sky for a while, hoping to see some visual changes in the sky. However, aside from maybe a flash of light, which he wasn't sure really happened or not, he couldn't see anything else.

A few moments later, the weird feeling of some pulse hitting him disappeared, and Alex couldn't help but wonder if he had hallucinated what had just happened.

"What are you staring at?" the princess asked once again after not getting any answer the first time.

"Sorry, I was just..." Alex looked back in that direction and wondered what he was really trying to find in that direction. "I don't know. I thought I noticed something, it might be a mistake. Where were we again?"

He quickly changed the topic and the princess noticed that he didn't want to talk about it, so she went along.

"You were telling me about the 3 things you were looking for in our new Alchemist," the Princess said.

"Right! What I'm looking for is Talent, Experience, and Ego," Alex said.

"Talent is obvious as you most likely want people that can make the best pills," Alex said. "However, just finding people that can make pills won't help you a lot."

"You also need people with enough experience," Alex said.

"I don't see how that's any relevant," the princess said. "Every single person here today is a master in their own right. They have been making pills for ages. Experience is the last thing they won't have."

Alex nodded. "While you may be right about that, it is not the type of experience I'm looking for," he said.

"Oh, what type is it then," the princess asked.

"The experience I'm talking about is knowing when something you have just received is better than what you have. If not that, then at least know that testing it won't hurt very much since I did give them 80 minutes in total to make simply one pill that triumphs it all," Alex said.

"Are you that confident in your pill recipe?" the princess asked.

"No one should be able to come up with one that is better," Alex said without hesitation.

"Alright, so what about Ego?" the princess asked.

"It's simple really," Alex said. "Those who try will know that my recipe is better. I just want to see if their ego isn't too big to stop them from using it."

"I don't think you would want an alchemist that is not willing to learn from others when the time comes," Alex said.

"I see. We wouldn't want someone like that," the princess said. "But will there be someone that is as good as you?"

Alex smiled. It wasn't a surprise that the princess knew he was a True Immortal alchemist by now. The only reason the news hadn't spread was probably that she didn't want to offend him.

That or she was afraid of Shen Jing.

Either way, the two of them had acted like the other person was not aware of anything regarding that topic.

"I will find you the best I can," Alex said.

The hour passed quickly as the two of them continued their conversation and soon people started coming out of the Alchemy room with smiles on their faces.

Most of them thought they were the best here. Alex was going to love to see how they all did.

Once they all arrived, Alex brought out a Pill tester and said, "Bring out your best pill and let me test it."

#### Chapter 737: Winner

Alex didn't need the Pill testers, but he still brought out 5 of them for everyone else's sake.

"Please give me your pills," Alex said to the first man to his left. While he looked through the pills and put them one by one in the 5 different testers.

As they waited for the result to come, Alex asked the man, "What did you think of the recipe I gave you?"

"It was good," the man said with no other expression on his face. Alex immediately knew he hadn't used it.

The results came and the best pill was around 56%.

Alex went on to the next one and did the same thing. This person said that he did use the recipe, but only for the last one, but it was the first time he used that recipe so he got a little confused and messed up.

The results came and his best pill was around 53%.

It went on for a while as Alex tested everyone's pills and asked the same question. Most of them didn't bother with the new recipe as 80 minutes was too fast a time for them to risk their pills.

That wasn't to say that no one used it. A couple of people had clearly heard him say that this was an improved recipe of his, so they had tried it immediately.

While the first 2 pills weren't what they wanted, soon they got a much better result.

By the end, they were making pills that were in the 60% range.

Xue Meirong came forth and handed her pills. Alex put the pills in the testers and asked her the same question.

"What did you think about the new recipe?" he asked.

"I don't know," she said. "I didn't bother with it. I had too many things on my mind anyway."

"Okay," Alex said and waited.

The fogs rolled up in the tester and soon he saw the number 63% in one of the testers.

"Not bad," Alex said. She was the highest yet and she had done it by herself.

Although, Alex doubted she did it using the same recipe everyone else had. Her father must've improved the recipe somewhat and passed it along.

Alex moved on to the next few people and the best he got was 61% by someone who used his recipe.

"Hello," the final participant came and spoke with a nervous voice.

"Hi, your pills?" Alex asked.

"Here," she gave it nervously with a shaking hand. Alex started putting in the pills into the testers and even as he did, his eyes slightly widened at the result.

"You used my recipe?" he asked confidently.

"Yes, yes," the girl with the green and orange-colored robe said. "Can you tell me who changed that recipe? That was amazing."

"Thank you. That was me," Alex said.

"Wow, but you're so young," she said.

Alex had a favorable impression of the girl. "Sister Zhanrou isn't that old herself," he said.

"Ahem, little Yu, why are you flirting with her?" the princess asked in a low voice.

"I'm not," Alex said. "I'm just creating a favorable atmosphere between us two, considering we will have to work together for over 10 months now."

Just as he said that the crowd made a gasping sound and Alex smiled at the princess.

The princess looked to the testers and realized what had just happened.

71%.

"Congratulations, Gu Zhanrou. You are now the Royal Alchemist for the Luminance Empire," the princess said.

"Wow? Really? Yes!" Gu Zhanrou celebrated while all the other participants congratulated her.

"Wait, no! How did she get 71%? She must've cheated," Xue Meirong said.

"What? No, I didn't," Gu Zhanrou said. "You're just mad you didn't beat me."

"Zhanrou, you know yourself you're not as good as me," Xue Meirong said.

"That's arguable at best," Zhanrou said. "Besides, I won, didn't I? You might've won if you had followed his recipe instead of being stubborn."

"What's going on here? I hear my daughter shouting," Xue Mufan said as he walked over to the group.

"We chose our alchemist, senior," the princess said. "Your daughter is just angry that it wasn't her."

"Oh, she didn't win? What happened?" Mufan asked.

After getting a short primer on what had happened, Mufan laughed a bit. "Don't be a sore loser, rongrong," he said.

"But... how could she and I have such difference?" Meirong asked.

"Well, it sounds like she had a better recipe," Mufan said. "Which if I say honestly, I'm very curious about. How did you come across such an amazing recipe, Junior?"

"I came up with it myself," Alex said.

"How?" Mufan asked curiously.

Alex gave a single thin smile and said, "now senior, I'm not going to give away trade secrets just like that."

"Ah, right. My apology," Xue Mufan said. "Well, if there is nothing else, then I will leave now. Come, rongrong."

Xue Meirong gave a snort to Zhanrou and then turned to Alex before saying. "You think you're some big shot huh? I will show you how great I am in the Alchemy competition," she said.

"Well, my apologies, but I won't be attending the competition," Alex said.

"Coward!" Xue Meirong said before walking away.

Alex gave her a weird look as she and Mufan flew away. 'Why does everyone think I'm running away?' he wondered.

"We will leave now too," the different alchemists said and started leaving one by one.

Finally, only the princess, Alex, and Gu Zhanrou remained.

"Well, you two talk. I have things to do. Welcome to the palace, miss Alchemist," the princess said.

"Thank you," Zhanrou said excitedly.

After the princess left, Zhanrou and Alex sat down by the table and started talking. The two talked about themselves and got to know each other.

Alex talked a bit about him but didn't go into details for the most part, while Zhanrou couldn't stop speaking about herself.



She was one of the best disciples from the Azure Leaves school. It was an Alchemy-focused school like the Hong Wu sect was and was one of the main rivals of the Falling Lotus sect, which was more popular than it due to it having more than just Alchemy.

Because of that, since a young age, Zhanrou had come to see Meirong as her rival, and for the first time today, she had won against her.

In her nearly 36 years of living, she had finally gotten the victory she wanted.

"Her father is too good and she always ends up getting the best training resources, while I have to work for mine," Zhanrou said. "I'm sure I get better with good ingredients and recipes too."

"Ooh, can you give me some of the recipes that you changed?" she asked.

Alex thought for a moment and wondered if he should do it or not. In the end, he nodded. "I will give you a few of them," he said as he planned to give her the most basic ones that would be useful for the Royal family.

After staying here for 2 years, he wouldn't want to leave the place worse than when he joined.

"Ooh, I can't wait," Zhanrou said excitedly.

The two of them continued talking for a while before the princess came back and took her on a tour of the palace.

Alex was finally free and returned back to his room as well.

## Chapter 738: Farewell

The following months went by very quickly. With nothing much to do, Alex spent most of the time just focusing on himself.

The Winter Moon cultivation technique his master gave had become practically useless long ago, but even so, that was all Alex had most of the time to contain his Yang aura.

Even though it took his 3 days of cultivating with this technique to revert 1 day's worth of change, he did it as he had no other choice.

He did find Yin treasures that affected him, but they were getting harder and harder to find. It was as if the more he used Yin treasures, the more tolerant his body was getting to it.

So, each time he had to go out and find something strong, as weaker ones only made the yang stronger.

In the final 10 months that Alex had remained in the palace, nearly 4 months of his time was spent on just fixing his body, so there wasn't much time to cultivate either.

As such, in that time, he had only managed to reach True King 5th realm. Pearl on the other hand didn't have the same problem as him, but he was still slow and only reached True King 7th realm.

He would've probably done better had he managed to go out and train, but Alex had no time to leave the palace and go all the way to the east.

He hoped Shen Jing would help him, but Shen Jing never came to train them again. Alex guessed he must've left without saying goodbye. He had said he would likely leave without telling him, but it still stung him a bit to know that he wouldn't see him for at least a decade more.

Without Shen Jing, Alex's life became that more simple once again. Whether it was a bad thing or not, he wouldn't know.

Due to the increase of his Yang aura, he had slowed down Alchemy as well. Most of the time, it was getting difficult to make pills for longer than a few hours.

Not only that, it even hampered his task to improve recipes. So, Alex stopped making pills for a while and focused on Formations, Talismans, and poisons.

Zhanrou had taken over the task of making most of the pills after Alex gave her some of the recipes.

She begged him to teach her how to improve, but he didn't feel like giving out all the advantages he had.

If everyone started having good recipes, his value would certainly lower quite a bit. While he wasn't materialistic as most other people, he still cared about his worth to people.

His time with the royal family was coming to a close and in just another day, he would be leaving.

The princess wanted to throw a big farewell party, but Alex didn't want such a thing.

So, she compromised with him and threw a small one with amazing spirit foods and quality entertainment full of the greatest musicians and dancers of the city.

The party was small and the guest lists smaller. Aside from Princess Xumei, there were a few other princes and princesses that Alex had managed to befriend.

Shurin was there with her mother who she introduced to just at that party alone. In the 2 years, she was with Alex, she had grown from Peak Mind Tempering realm cultivator to a True Disciple 6th realm cultivator.

According to the people around her, her cultivation was very fast and she would one day become one of the leading members of the next younger generation.

Ruoran had come as well to visit him. After Alex's help, Ruoran's cultivation journey had become smooth and he was now a True Emperor 3rd realm cultivator.

Alex thanked him as he would a master for teaching him everything he knew about growing and taking care of plants.

Ruoran thanked him for all the aid he provided him.

Zhanrou was both excited and sad about the farewell party as she felt her only friend in the palace was about to leave her. Sure she had other friends, but none of them had the same interest in Alchemy as Alex did.

"I'm sure we'll meet again. This isn't our final meeting," Alex said.

"Yeah, but I will feel lonely," she said. Alex could only smile at that.

The party ended not long after and everyone went their separate ways.

Alex returned back to his room and cultivated one last night before he was going to leave in the morning.

The next morning, he heard a knock on the door. Alex opened the door and found the princess standing outside.

"Come with me," the princess said. She started moving before he could even respond.

Alex followed her quickly and asked, "where are we going?"

"My father wants to see you," the princess said.

"Oh," Alex was surprised. In the 2 years, Alex had stayed here, he had never, the Emperor had never once bothered to visit him or call for him, so he was surprised he was only being called while he was about to leave.

Alex reached the Palace hall and entered with the princess.

"You're finally here," the Emperor said when he saw Alex.

"You called for me, your majesty?" Alex asked.

"Just to bid you farewell and thank you for all the things you've done for us," the Emperor said.

"That was my job, your majesty," Alex said.

"We both know you had no duty or responsibility to us and yet you still helped us. For that, I thank you," The Emperor said as he even bowed a little.

"Father?" the princess was surprised. She had never seen her father bow before any.

"Your majesty, please trust me when I say that I wouldn't have done it if I didn't enjoy it. I am sure in the future I will look back to these days of mine in the palace with nostalgia," Alex said.

"That makes me a little happy," the Emperor said. "I wouldn't want to anger someone who even he values so much."

"He?" Alex was a little confused. "You mean brother Shen Jing?"

"Yes," the Emperor said. "You call him brother? Can you tell me what your relationship is exactly?"

Alex shrugged. "I guess he's like a master to me. He treats me like a little brother. He teaches me different things and helps me out a lot."

"You are quite lucky to be treated like that by him," the Emperor said with a hint of fear and envy in his voice.

Alex got a distinct feeling in his heart and so he asked the Emperor. "Do you know his identity?" Alex asked.

"Of course," the Emperor said and finally saw Alex's curious face. "Do you not know?"

"He never tells me who he really is," Alex said. "Can you tell me?"

The Emperor hesitated a bit.

"My father made an oath to keep his identity secret. He won't even tell me," the princess said from the side.

"An oath?" Alex looked at the Emperor in shock. Just what was Shen Jing's identity to make even the Emperor say an oath just to keep his secret.

'Do the hegemony islands have that much power?' Alex wondered.

"Anyway, I didn't call you here to talk about him. I came to say thank you and goodbye," the Emperor said.

Alex quickly threw out the thoughts he was having and thanked the Emperor himself.

Once they were done, the princess and Alex left the Palace hall.

"I guess this is goodbye then," Alex said to the princess.

"You're leaving now?" she asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "I already have my farewell so I should leave now."

"Where will you go next?" she asked.

"Um, remember that chilly area you told me about in the east? I think I will go there," Alex said.

"The Icy Hell?" the princess asked. "Are you still looking for Yin Treasures?"

"Yes," Alex said. "I'm afraid I will have to keep looking for them until... nevermind. I will leave now."

"Okay, take care. Come to us if you need anything," the princess said.

"I will, thank you," Alex said. "Goodbye."

Alex turned around and left the palace. He felt a bit of melancholy in his heart for leaving a place he had been in for the last 2 years, but his need to go to the place known as the Icy Hell triumphed every other feeling.

'If what they say about the place being a frozen nightmare is true, then I will have to prepare some pills to heat me up,' Alex thought and made his way to the Alchemy guild.

While he trusted his yang body to keep him host in most situations, he would still prepare for the cold just in case his body couldn't handle it.

He walked into the guild and saw a long crowd out front. So, he walked to the back of the hall.

"Oh, hi brother Yu, did you come to register for the Alchemy competition?" one of the friendly staff that recognized him asked.

"The wha— Oh right, I forgot it was starting soon. No wonder there are so many people in the front," Alex said. "But no, I'm not here for the competition. I won't be taking part in it."

"Really?" the staff gave a disappointed look. "I would've thought you would join the competition and want to show them how good you are. Given how young you are, I'm sure you will have a lot of people try to sponsor you too."

Alex smiled, he knew what would happen if he went through the competition. Even if he didn't get the first place and just came in the Top 10, just based on his age alone, there would be a line of people that would try to take him in their group.

They had done so to his mother and she was already 49 when she got 2nd place in the talisman competition. Not to mention, she already had a sect behind her and they still came.

Given how Alex had nobody behind him, these people would be like vultures to his dead meat.

"Yeah, I'm not taking part," Alex told the staff member.

"Well, I guess it's your choice, so I can't say anything," the staff member said. "Still, given how many times you come here to find Yin treasures, I'm surprised you are going to let go of this one."

"Sorry?" Alex was a little confused.

"I was talking about the rewards for the Alchemy competition," the staff said. "Have you not seen the rewards yet?"

"No," Alex said. "It has a Yin treasure?"

"An incredible one too. Look, it's a saint rank Yin ingredient," the staff member said as he gave Alex a talisman.

Alex read the talisman which turned out to be full of information about the competition. Alex skipped all the other information and went directly to the rewards.

The rewards were quite incredible, to say the least.

The top 10 all got a True Heaven ranked artifact each along with 5 thousand True Spirit stones.

Those that entered the top 5 got a few rare True ranked ingredients, along with another 10 thousand True spirit stones.



The person that came in Third place got 1 saint ranked artifact on top of what the Top 5 got.

The person that came in Second place got 1 Saint ranked artifact and 2 Saint pill recipes on top of what the Top 5 got.

The person that came in First got 1 Saint ranked artifact, 2 Saint pill recipes, and 3 Saint ranked ingredients on top of what the Top 5 got.

Alex read the names of the 3 ingredients.

The first one was a Hammerhead Snake's venom. Alex had never heard about the venom being used in any pill, but it would work well as a venom alone.

The second ingredient was what the staff had told him about. It was a Blizzard's Rainbow core, a multicolored fruit that was filled to the brim with Yin energy. This was something that would definitely help him a lot.

Alex was already wondering if he should change his decision about not joining the competition when he laid his eyes on the third ingredient on the list.

His eyes went wide as his breathing became shallow with shock. He had done it. He had finally found it.

There it was, the final reward for the first place in the competition.

The Blood Spirit Ginseng.

Chapter 739: Competition Day

"Aww, where's my little boy?" Helen ran towards Alex and hugged him in the room he had booked.

"Mother, you don't have to call me your little boy anymore. I'm 25 already," Alex said.

"Hmph, is that how you should be speaking to your mother who you haven't seen in over a year? Besides, why do you think I'm talking about you? I'm talking about Pearl," Helen said.

Alex sighed. "Come out, Pearl," he said.

"Meow?" Pearl looked around after coming out and caught sight of Helen. "Mother!" He jumped straight into her embrace.

"There's my little boy," she said and rubbed his head.

"I missed you, mother," Pearl said.

"I missed you too," Helen said as she hugged him gently.

"He's close to being a True Emperor soon, you won't hurt him even if you use all your strength," Alex told her.

"Wow, you're close to being a True Emperor realm cultivator. You're so great, Pearl," Helen said.

"Aren't I?" Pearl asked with a proud face.

Alex watched his mother give more love to Pearl than him and felt a sense of envy. He waited for a few moments and finally, she stopped focusing entirely on Pearl.

"So, you really did register huh?" she asked. "I guess you had to after you saw the rewards."

"Yeah, I finally found it after nearly 10 years. I can't let it go now," Alex said.

"Yeah, I can understand that," Helen said. "Are you confident in winning this?"

Alex hesitated a bit. Any other time, he might have said yes. However, right now his body was heating up more than it did regularly and that would affect his performance a lot.

"I should be as long as I find any sort of Yin treasure to revert back my Yang," Alex said. "Hopefully, the first few competitions don't require me to be at my best."

"Anyway, you came with the Alchemy guild's group, right? They let you come with them?" Alex asked.

"Of course," Helen said. "Despite how I look, I'm already a True Earth alchemist. If I continue for a few years, I will reach True Heaven surely."

"But still, I'm surprised they—"

"Well, I also told them you were my son, so they had to let me come with them," Helen said.

"I see," Alex said with a smile. He quickly changed the conversation and started talking about other things. "So, you already learned so much huh?"

"Of course. I never knew how easy it was to make pills. Especially since I have recipes to follow. Although at the start..."

The mother and son duo continued talking until midnight and only then did they both retreat to their room.

Alex soon started using the Winter Moon technique to do whatever he could to revert even the littlest yang in his body.

The technique was slow, but perhaps there was a solace here as his yang didn't increase while he was cultivating the technique.

Early next morning, the two of them left the hotel, and along with the rest of the people from the guild went to the competition ground.

Once they reached the location, Alex was surprised to see the number of people there. The previous time he came here, he was a mere audience member, so he hadn't given the scope much thought.

However, now that he was looking at it from the perspective of a participant, he could see how much pressure there would be on them to do their best.

"Oh right, before I forget," Alex said and quickly took out a bunch of storage bags and handed them to his mother.

"Keep these for me," he said and took off his ring. "These too."

His mother took them and nodded. "Good luck," she said while holding Pearl in her hands.

"I'll see you guys later," Alex said and left towards a different section of the place where the registered participants were brought in.

Alex was allowed to enter once he showed his Alchemist badge. He was taken to a separate, massive room where he was assigned a random number 3.

He didn't know what the number meant yet, but he took it off his mind as that would likely come later.

Alex was truly shocked when he saw the number of people that were participating. Since anyone below 50 years could join, every single person that had already entered the True realms was here.

Alex understood that Saint realms were likely allowed here, but there was no Saint realm cultivator below the age of 50 that was also an Alchemist.

Alex looked around and saw a few familiar faces. Most of them were people he had tested to join the Royal family.

Others were people he saw around the guild while he went there.

"Brother Yu, you came?" an excited voice spoke from the side as a girl approached him.

"Hi, sister Zhanrou," Alex said as he met the orange and green-robed Zhanrou.

"I thought you weren't coming," she said.

"I changed my mind after seeing the rewards," Alex said.

"Right, right, you do like the Yin treasures quite a bit, don't you?" she said. "Well, I'm glad you came. But I'm afraid the first place is gone now."

"Now you're just talking nonsense," Alex said.

He turned his head to his left and saw Xue Meirong glancing at him however after he turned around, she immediately turned her head and looked away.

"Well, she's here too," Zhanrou said. "I promise I will beat her this time around."

"Good luck," Alex said.

Suddenly, a hand fell on his shoulders and a tall man approached from behind him.

"I'm surprised to see you here. I thought you said you weren't joining," he said.

Alex turned around to see Zhou Ren standing behind him.

"I'm afraid some things came up and I had to go back on my words," Alex said. "I'm glad to see you here."

"Me too," Zhou Ren said. "I will see you at the competition. Take care sister Zhanrou."

Zhou Ren walked back to a group of disciples who all wore the white robes that belonged to the Zhou family.

"How do you know him?" Zhanrou asked him quietly.

"There's a feud between us," Alex said. "I just can't seem to figure out if it's a friendly feud or not."

"Well, if it's with him then it's most likely not friendly. He's known to be either a show-off or bully to people he deems below him. Many people don't like him at all," Zhanrou said.

"Well, he can't bully me since... well, he didn't bully me when I was a guest in the Royal family. I don't know how that will change now that I am no longer there," Alex said.

"Oh right, that reminds me. On whose behalf are you taking part in this competition?" Zhanrou asked him.

Alex was about to answer when he heard some loud but distant-sounding announcements outside. The competition had getting commenced by the host.

"I'm on no one's behalf," Alex said. "I'm on my own."

"Really? That... that will cause you trouble later, you know?" Zhanrou said.

"Compared to getting what I want, that will be a piece of cake," Alex said.

"You sure have a lot of confi—"

"Can I have your attention please?" someone spoke from upfront.

Everyone started quieting down and looked to the front and saw a woman standing before them.

"The first competition is about to start, so we would like you to get ready. You will be going out in groups of 20 and taking part in the first competition."

"I'm sure everyone was assigned a number, right? That is the group you are in for today. Everyone in group 1, please come forward," the woman said.

20 different Alchemists of all gender and age came forth.

"Please go through here and have your information set up. We will also check a few other things if you don't mind," the woman said.

Alex saw the people walk through and formation and talk about something. Then, they walked outside.

Alex heard shouts of cheers and introductions from the host before the rules were about to be explained.

Just as that time, the sounds cut off and the room was silent again.

The woman smiled at them and said, "You will not be allowed to hear about anything that happens in the competition today for the sake of fairness."

'Well, guess I'll have to wait for my turn then,' Alex thought.

Chapter 740: First Round

After 2 rounds of what felt uneventful due to the participants being unable to hear any of it, group 3 was finally called for their turn.

Alex walked up to the group of staff members who were calling for them.

"Good luck," Zhanrou said from behind and waited.

Alex reached the staff and was made to go through a formation. Since the formation was upside down, he wouldn't be able to see what it was without using his spiritual sense.

While he wouldn't mind using it during the alchemy, he didn't want to blatantly show it off right here.

"25 years?" he heard the shocked sounds of some staff members next to him.

Alex quickly turned around and realized that the formation was meant to check his age. 'No wonder they are shocked,' he thought.

He couldn't help but wonder what they would do if he was here 2 years ago when he had the same knowledge as right now and considerably more talent considering his body hadn't regressed to such a hot mess.

The staff members then took his name and affiliations and put him amidst a group of 19 other people.

Alex looked at the group and saw that there wasn't really anyone that he recognized. There was a person or two that he saw before but he didn't count them as he didn't know them at all.

As Alex waited to walk out, a wave of spiritual sense washed over him.

"Please get your storage bags checked before you walk out," a voice said and everyone got in a line to get their storage bags checked.



Alex handed it over and the saint realm cultivator checked it. Since he only had a cauldron in his storage bag, he was allowed to go out easily.

Some of the other ones had to keep back their storage bags because of the items they had.

"You can move out one at a time now," the staff said and the first person in the line moved out. As soon as he was out, Alex heard the host speak out loud and introduce the participant.

One by one, everyone started walking out, and finally, it was Alex's turn.

"Next up, we have Yu Ming. A 25 years old, True King 5th realm cultivator that is also a True Heaven Alchemist. Most of you may know him as the person who spread the recipes for medicinal pastes, but he is also the first Alchemist that was appointed by the Royal family in a long time," the host spoke up.

'Wow, he sure knows a lot,' Alex thought with a surprised look.

After a few more introductions, they were finally all on stage and the first competition for the group was underway.

The competition, as Alex had expected from the other competition, was an ingredient recognition competition.

There were exactly 100 ingredients in front of the group, but they were hidden in a bunch of wooden boxes that were meant to keep their energy intact.

"You will all get at least 5, and at most 10, chances to come up here and pick an ingredient for yourself. Your task is to name it."

"If you answer the name correctly, you get 2 points. If you don't, you lose 2 points. These points will be deducted from your overall points so be careful."

"If you happen to choose an ingredient and don't know its name, you can choose to not say anything to preserve your points."

"Okay, so let us have you lined up for the competition. For the sake of fairness, we will do it by age," the host said.

Alex didn't even have to look around to know that he was the youngest. He lined up in the front and everyone else was lined up behind him with the help of the staff members.

"Come on up," the host said. "You will have 10 seconds to answer."

Alex nodded and walked to the front to see 100 different boxes laying around. '100 boxes and 20 players. It does seem fair,' he thought and randomly chose a box.

"Box 76," the host said. "What could possibly be inside?"

Alex slowly opened up the box and saw a branch that was full of greenish-blue thorns.

"Aquamarine Bellrose's thorns," Alex said.

"Correct! 2 points," the host said and took the box. Box number 76 was now off the table.

Alex returned to the back of the group and looked up at the floating images that were meant for the audience.

Surprisingly, the ones he could see always had the ingredients hidden. The second person after him hesitated for a moment and handed back the item.

Then the third one went and answered, getting it correct. Of the 19 others, about three-quarters of them answered, while the other quarter chose not to answer.

Finally, it was Alex's turn again. He walked up to the ingredients, picked one, and answered.

"Blue Spirit Vine."

"Correct!" the host said.

Then, Alex returned back to the line again. The same thing went on one after another until Alex had gone through 5 different rotations and had answered all 5 of his ingredients.

He had gotten all 10 points that were meant for everyone to get. And yet, his 6th turn came up as there were still 18 or so ingredients remaining that people had failed to answer.

Due to the host's announcement, most people had skipped the number that others had failed to answer or in some cases even made mistakes.

Alex could've chosen those, but he needed to play the game to get as many points as possible. As such, he had left the harder ones for last so everyone would have to skip over those and not get enough points.

Alex picked his 6th ingredient and answered it nonchalantly. Getting his 12th point, he returned back to the end of the group and waited for the group to answer.

If even 3 of them didn't manage to answer or got it wrong, Alex would get to guess again and that was all he wanted.

He waited for the people to go up front and name the ingredient, but to his surprise, there weren't just 3 people that failed to name the ingredient, there were 11.

Meaning, that when Alex's turn came around for the 7th time, there were exactly 9 ingredients left.

Alex went forward and named one of the 9 remaining ingredients, getting him 14 points.

He waited for the other 8 ingredients, silently hoping the others couldn't name it.

The other 19 members went through the round again, and Alex's turn came up again. This time, there were 4 more ingredients remaining.

Alex hadn't opened up these boxes so he was curious why everyone was failing these.

He went ahead and opened one of the boxes to find a Blue rose flower that just screamed Blue Spirit Rose, and that was what Alex wanted to say. However, before he could answer it, he realized that his mind was thinking of another answer on its own.

He looked at the flower curiously and noticed something that was hard to notice if he wasn't looking for it. Underside the blue flower, there was a patch of black that would otherwise be mistaken as a shadow.

"True Wound's Rose flower," Alex answered.

"Correct!" the host shouted.

Alex smiled and went back to the group. But even as he did, he realized that even after all of this time, he was still having to rely on Alchemy God's knowledge.

'How much more do I have to learn Alchemy before I can name an ingredient accurately without the skill's help?' he wondered.

He watched the people struggle to name the remaining 3 ingredients. By the time he was back there again, 2 of the original 3 remained.

'Again huh?' he thought and walked forward. He opened one of the boxes to find a fruit that he thought was Surging Henbit Orange. However, he didn't answer and checked it more carefully.

There was an answer in his mind, but he ignored it for the sake of finding the name on his own.

He stared at the fruit for 5 seconds before realizing that the leaves were rather thin and very dark green. Not to mention, the veins on the leaves were pointed in the other direction.

'Wait, this is not Surging Henbit Orange, this has to be Thin-leaved Skunk Orange,' he thought.

When he checked it with the answer in his mind, he realized he was right.

"Thin-Leaved Skunk Orange!" Alex answered.

"Correct!" the host said.

Alex smiled and returned to the group with only 1 box remaining on the table.

He counted his points and realized he had 18 points at the moment, and if everyone failed to answer the remaining box, he would get his 10th turn.

Alex didn't think that was possible as there were 19 members in front of him.

However, to his surprise, every single one of them failed to answer the name.

'How hard could it be? People should know by now not to go with the obvious answer,' Alex thought.

When his turn finally came around, he walked ahead and picked the final box.

He opened the box and saw a piece of ginseng in there. What was perhaps more surprising was that the name of the ginseng was pretty simple.

However, when he tried to answer it, he realized that there was a certain pull on his mind from the ginseng that was disturbing his thoughts.

'No wonder they couldn't answer,' he thought. 'They couldn't even think straight.'

Fortunately, Alex's mind wasn't so weak to fall victim to such manipulation. So, he loudly answered, "Mind Swallowing Ginseng."

"Correct!"