

Alchemy 981

Chapter 981: Malleability

The mad immortal said a few more things before he left, but Alex couldn't focus on those words at all. His mind was occupied with the new knowledge he had just received.

"There are so many worlds out there... just like our own?" he asked. Alex knew there were multiple ones, but he had never thought there would be as many as the stars in the sky.

"Yes," Godslayer said to him. "There should be nearly 33 worlds with Immortals alone, and nearly 70 where the highest Spirit veins available are Saint rank or True ranks. Maybe even just common rank."

"The demons and humans used to control half of the lands, but after the war, the demons had to give up the majority of their land in a truce for the humans to not destroy them. Now, the demons barely control a third of it," Godslayer said.

'33 Immortal lands,' Alex thought in shock again.

"Wait, so where do you go when you ascend?" Alex asked.

"Unless you have someone that is willing to take you to some special place, this realm will send you to wherever it can," Godslayer said.

"Then you do not know where I could end up when I reach the Immortal realms right?" he asked.

"No," Godslayer said. "Also, forget about these things for now. Your question revealed no result. Don't ask him about his sect, ask him about himself. We need to find something so you don't die and by correlation, I don't die."

Alex quickly nodded. "I will get to it," he said.

After cultivating for a while, he got back to making the pills. He didn't focus on making pills any more than he focused on practicing his techniques or learning how to make better swords.

A few more months passed by with barely anything changing. The only thing of importance that Alex could think about during these times was the fact that an entire year had passed since his arrival here.

And yet, he was nowhere close to any of his goals.

He had not made many swords or a cauldron. He had not improved his cultivation base. And he had not, purposefully, completed the pill yet.

Alex could see the old man was incredibly annoyed now whenever he failed to make a pill that survived the lightning. If he failed any more times, he couldn't be sure that the old man wouldn't just kill him right there in his anger.

Alex needed to be very careful.

He told the old man that he would feel more confident if he had his cauldron, so he requested a 3 months period where he would only focus on creating artifacts.

The old man thought for a bit and accepted. He even gave him some books on artifacts that Alex read.

The book had insights into various things that Alex didn't know about regarding artifacts, but it wasn't very useful when making something so simple as swords or cauldrons.

Alex had made a few more swords until now, spending about 100 tons of ores in between the swords, anvil, and hammer, but the one he was going to try now was perhaps his greatest endeavor to date.

He was going to refine nearly 40 tons of Ore into a sword.

To even begin the process was a chore. The amount of time it took for him to pulverize 40 tons of ore was not something that could be easily done in a single day.

Alex had to spend nearly 5 days, in between cultivating, to completely pulverize them. After mixing the broken ore in the water he was able to get rid of most of the dirt and soluble objects in the ore.

Then, Alex started smelting the remainder of the ore.

He had to do it bit by bit, so it took Alex almost 6 whole hours to completely refine the 16 tons of pure tungsten.

The sword he was going to make would have the same amount of metal as the anvil and hammer combined.

The tungsten had cooled down by the time he was done with smelting it all, so he had to send it all back to the forge, this time to simply heat it up.

Once the molten metal was out, Alex poured them on the enlarged Anvil and immediately started compounding it even before tempering it.

He wasn't doing it for no reason. Godslayer had told him to do so.

Tempering and Compounding were interchangeable in terms of when in the process they could be performed. However, tempering something that was compounded was nearly as hard as the number of times it was compounded.

Alex knew this, but he had no choice. With more metal than the anvil could hold, he had to compound it all for the metal to even be manageable.

Alex immediately started hitting the metal with his new hammer and quickly compounded it without regard to its size at the moment. He only wanted to make it manageable.

Once the metal was compounded 4 times, Alex stopped and began hitting it in a rhythmic pattern to temper it.

Compounding it 4 times meant that the sword would now be 4 times as hard to temper. However, Alex didn't lose any hope or keep any doubts in himself.

He did what he had sought to do and after what felt like a very long period of time, he successfully tempered the metal.

Godslayer was in his ear the whole time, aiding him through his task, telling him what to do.

"Compound the sword now," he said. Alex had compounded it 4 times already, but the remaining metal was still nearly 4 times as big as what a normal sword would look like.

So, he still needed to compound it. He still needed to make it smaller and thinner.

Alex struck the hot metal as hard as he could to continue pounding the metal in itself. He compounded the metal without stopping, but even as he tried, the compounding got harder and harder, until he couldn't compound it anymore.

The sword was still very large, nearly 2 and half times as large as he would want it to be, so he needed to compound it more.

But he couldn't anymore, and that was a problem.

"Dammit," he thought to himself. "I can't do it anymore."

"Keep compounding," Godslayer said.

"I can't, I don't have enough strength," Alex said.

"Then find some," Godslayer said.

Alex paused for a moment and immediately a line of blood poured out of his palm, onto the hammer and he started using the new strength to compound it.

With Saint Core 1st realm level of strength, his blood gave him a boost in power that nothing else could at the moment.

As soon as he used the blood manipulation to add strength to his hammer strikes, the compounding became easier and the 2 and a half times larger metal shrunk to about 2 times.

Then, the toughness of the metal showed once again. This time, he couldn't compound it even when he used his blood as powerfully as he could.

"Dammit," Alex thought. "I chewed more than I could swallow. I shouldn't have started with 40 tons of ore."

He complained, but he still tried. The 2 times as large blade of metal shrunk just a little more, but not much after that.

Alex tried and tried and tried, but he couldn't do it anymore. If anything, he was going to have to either make swords from this one pile of metal or use a heavy sword himself.

"Godslayer, what do I do?" Alex asked desperately.

"I can't help you in this matter. You are too weak," he said.

Alex frowned, but he couldn't fault the remark. He truly was too weak to compound it any further.

'Maybe I should stop,' he said and looked at the rectangular piece of metal. 'If only I could make them thinner.'

"Thinner..." Alex spoke softly as his mind remembered something from nearly 10 years ago.

It had been during the time he worked as the Royal family's alchemist in the Radiant City when he was training with Shen Jing.

Shen Jing had shown him something interesting at that time. He had taken his metal sword and thinned it without the sword losing its strength.

Alex was a little surprised when he remembered it. 'He was compounding it?' he thought.

He was using the property of metal to be easily deformed without breaking itself into bits. He was using the property of the metal that allowed it to be made into a sword in the first place.

Alex remembered the property, and now that he had made quite a few swords and was working with metal for quite a while, he understood it clearly too.

The metal cooled in front of him, but Alex couldn't find the strength to care.

"Kid? Kid!" Godslayer called for him after seeing Alex move away from the anvil and sit down. He was still going to call when he noticed that Alex had lost himself in the mysteries.

Even the mad immortal noticed when the sky moved and the worldly laws descended onto the separated space he had managed to create with the help of formation flags left behind for him indirectly by the Snow Immortal sect's founder.

The laws fell and settled onto Alex as he learned an entirely new dao that he had not expected to learn any time soon.

He had learned the Dao of Malleability.

Alex opened his eyes and contemplated the new understanding he had just gained. After a few minutes, he stood back up and walked over to the anvil.

With this newly learned Dao, he was sure to be able to compound the remaining metal to the desired size, which he would then turn into a sword.

Chapter 982: Midnight

Dao of Malleability consisted of a few minor Daos, all of which Alex had gained insights by directly learning the Dao of Malleability.

Alex could also see that the Dao of Malleability and the Dao of Metal were somewhat connected, so the two Daos were definitely part of a greater metal dao.

Alex returned to the solid blob of metallic staff and heated it up until it was melted and very malleable.

He struck the metal a few more times before stopping. Hitting truly wasn't going to work anymore and he needed to do something else.

He needed to use his newly learned dao.

Alex dropped his hammer and instantly used his intent to compress the metal in front of him. The world followed his command to do so and even then Alex felt the Qi being ripped out of him to compress the metal.

It took almost everything he had to make the metal thinner, and now, it was thinner than what a normal sword would look like by nearly 20%.

"I can't believe you learned a dao just like that," Godslayer said. "A rather important one for metalwork too."

"It happens," Alex said. "I should finish making the sword now."

The only thing that was now left was to make the shape of the sword and add some Qi lines. As for its sharpness, he would have to work with what he had without the Sharpness Dao.

The volume of the metal was smaller than what he would've hoped for, so he decided to make a thinner sword. He made the length of the blade up to about 80 centimeters, which including the hilt and handle would become over a meter easily.

The width was where he had to make a concession and thus it came to be about 3 centimeters wide at best. As for its thickness, it was already at the lowest amount possible.

Then, he sent his Qi to put in Qi lines throughout the artifact. As he did, he heard Godslayer saying something.

"3 Qi lines to the left, 2 in the middle, and 3 to the right. Make 8 of them at the base of the sword that goes upwards."

Alex was a little surprised to hear him speak in this part of the process, but he trusted his judgment when it came to swords, so he followed.

"The first of the left 3 curves to the right after 5 centimeters. The 2nd one curves to the right a centimeter after that. The last one makes a small loop right at the location where the second one would touch it before going straight on."

Godslayer started telling him one by one what to do, and Alex followed every instruction to the best he could.

He didn't even take away his focus to be surprised that Godslayer was giving him instructions on Qi lines. He simply did as told as the Qi lines slowly moved to the top, making countless bends and loops along the way.

By the end, Alex couldn't even make any sense of which Qi line was where, but he knew he had followed it perfectly because Godslayer said nothing else.

When Alex was done making the Qi lines, he was done making the sword as well. He was quickly going to put the sword into the water to cool it rapidly when Godslayer said something.

"Cool it with your blood before using water."

"What?" Alex was surprised.

"Just do it," Godslayer said.

Alex quickly brought out the blood in his body and poured it onto the hot metal that lay on the anvil.

When the blood touched the metal, it sizzled and boiled with extreme heat. However, even with that, Alex could sense something amazing.

The sword was taking in his blood and actually getting stronger. "Wh-what's happening?" he asked. As he asked, Alex felt a slight pain in his mind and heart, as if something had been torn away from him.

"You just blood refined the sword," Godslayer said.

"Oh, it thought that part came afterward when I was done with using my Qi to refine it and then use my blood to make it recognize me as its master," Alex said. "Also, wasn't I supposed to use my Blood Essence?"

"You don't have to with the amount of blood you used," Godslayer said. "Besides, blood refinement is not the same as the normal refinement."

"How is it different?" Alex asked.

"The sword now belongs to you, and you alone. Unless you are dead or your bloodline ceases to exist, the sword will forever only follow your orders," Godslayer said.

"Wait, so if I lost the sword, others won't be able to refine it?" he asked.

"No, not unless you're dead," Godslayer.

"I see," Alex nodded as he thought to himself. "That's... not bad, but you seem to have another reason for this too. What is it?"

"The second and perhaps most important reason for Blood Refinement is that the weapon is very capable of growing a spirit in it, far better than a weapon that is made normally," Godslayer said. "Which is good because if there is a spirit born in a weapon, then it means your weapon can grow along with you."

"Then... you will never have to change to another weapon," Godslayer said.

Alex was stunned to hear that the new sword he had made could now grow a spirit in it. "Wait, so why didn't I do that with the other swords? I could've made so many swords with spirits in them."

"You can't," Godslayer said. "A Blood Refinement requires the refiner to give away part of his Qi, Mind, and Body during the refinement process. You gave it Qi while making Qi lines, the gave it your body in the form of your blood, and you gave it your mind, in the form of part of your soul and spirit that was stripped away from you."

"You can afford to give away your Qi and Blood, but even you do not have a robust Soul or Spirit that won't be hurt from excessive giving away," Godslayer said.

"I see," Alex said. "So that was the pain I felt. It was my spirit being stripped away." Alex released his spiritual sense and realized that it was slightly weaker than it should have been. He had permanently lost that portion of his spirit.

"So one really cannot perform this refinement over and over without fearing of damaging their spirit, huh?" Alex asked.

"That is one of the reasons why Blood Refinement is becoming rarer and rarer, and is almost all gone in the mortal realms."

"Many can only afford to give away Qi and maybe a bit of blood, which is why they perform normal refinement. They cannot afford to give parts of their soul and spirit away. As such, you won't find such treasures here, and only in the higher realms."

"The other reason is that one needs to be present at the creation of the artifact to impart Qi, Blood, and Spirit. The artificer creator cannot pour his own Qi in this process and has to rely on the one he is making the artifact for."

"Since most don't have knowledge of how artifacts should be created or how Qi lines should be made, they end up failing and losing part of their soul. That is a big mishap in a person's cultivation journey, so many don't want to take the risk," Godslayer said.

"You're right," Alex thought. "Qi lines are hard to even for me after all these times."

As he said that, Alex looked at the bloody sword. "Right, what is up with the Qi lines you made me make?" he asked. "You've never done that."

Godslayer's voice suddenly turned menacing as he said softly, "test it."

Alex was a little creeped out, but since this was his sword, he didn't see any reason to be afraid.

The sword had no handle and was bloody, so Alex gave it a quick rinse, before adding a makeshift handle for now.

Then, he poured his Qi into it. Something happened, but Alex wasn't able to tell what. It was as if a door had been half opened, but he still couldn't go through it.

"This Qi line doesn't work," Alex said with a bit of anger in his voice. If he had spent part of his soul on something that didn't work, he was going to make sure Godslayer was thoroughly punished.

"Pour in Yin Qi," Godslayer said with the same menacing voice.

"Okay," Alex said and poured in Yin Qi. As soon as he did, he saw what was happening. The Yin Qi he had sent in suddenly changed its attribute to death and another something, which Alex could guess was darkness.

The dark gray sword with glittering specks of light suddenly turned pitch black while the specks of light still remained like the stars in the night sky.

"What is this?" Alex asked with a confused expression.

"Send me in!" Godslayer said.

"What?" Alex asked.

"Send me into the sword!"

Alex contemplated for a bit but quickly realized that Godslayer was too weak to take away control from him. So, he did as Godslayer told him to and used his intent to force Godslayer into the sword.

Godslayer finally slipped out of Alex and into something that fit him the best.

"Haha! I'm finally back into a sword, and it is just like my own previous body," he said excitedly.

Alex quickly tested his control and sighed in relief that Godslayer hadn't done anything bad.

"This is now your sword," Godslayer said to him. "You should give it a name."

"A name?" Alex thought as he looked at the pitch black sword with specks of light glittering in it.

He thought of a name that he thought described it best..

"Midnight."

Chapter 983: Memory

"Midnight? That's not too bad a name, I guess," Godslayer said. "But it will never beat mine, Godslayer."

"That's arguable," Alex said softly.

"Try me. See how strong the sword is," Godslayer asked.

"Sure," Alex said and poured his Qi into the sword. The sword turned black once again, matching its name.

Then, Alex tried swinging it around. "Wow, I actually think it is heavy," he said. "It's been a while since I thought something was heavy."

"Quit looking at the weight and try out the skill in the sword," Godslayer said.

"Oh, there's a skill?" Alex was surprised. He poured in more Yin Qi and sent out a slash toward the wall in the distance.

Suddenly, a black slash was released from the sword, stronger than what Alex's cultivation base could release.

"Wow, that feels strong," Alex said. "That isn't your skill, but the sword's skill right?"

"Yes, it is not my skill. However, I can empower the sword with what death and darkness aura I gather," Godslayer said. "However, I don't know how long I can keep that up."

"Hm? What's wrong?" Alex asked.

"Goddammit, your newly formed spirit is already trying to fight back. It recognizes me as a foreign threat," Godslayer said.

Alex was surprised, and maybe even a little happy when he heard that. "Are you saying that my little sword spirit is so strong that he is already threatening you?" he asked.

"What? Of course not. It's incredibly weak," Godslayer said. "It is so weak that if I do anything than just ignore it, it might just die."

"Oh," Alex's smile went away when he heard that. "I guess I should be happy at the fact that the sword already has a spirit."

"Yes," Godslayer said. "It's weird how quickly it formed too. But I suppose there is something special about your body and soul. You were able to fight off my temptation when you were barely a True realm cultivator."

"I... suppose," Alex said as he fell into thought too. He never really thought about how strong his soul was, only ever his body and mind.

'I am in the saint realm, so soon I will have to worry about my soul too,' he thought. 'Although, Saint Soul realm is still quite far away for me, so I should be fine.'

Alex tested the sword for a while, enlarging it to see how big it would get, and compressing it to see if he could make it smaller.

He could use the sword normally without using Yin Qi, but when he did use Yin Qi, it turned black, and only then he could use the sword's skills.

"It's a nice sword if I do say so myself," Alex said. "Quite comfortable at the hand too."

Godslayer had already gone back to Alex's mind and spoke from in there. "You will need to make a better handle. Try making one with the metal too."

"I should," Alex said. "But right now, I should focus on something else."

Alex had spent a few too many weeks making various swords to learn, and now he was finally going to make his cauldron.

For the cauldron, he needed 30 tons of Ice Iron, 10 tons of Pale Onyx, 20 Tons of Violet Obsidian, and 100 tons of Starforged Tungsten.

The alloy made from these 4 components wasn't as strong or durable as just Starforged Tungsten by itself, but Alex was using the component for some other reason.

This was the composition that was used to make the forge back in the Snowsuit city that could easily melt Starforged Tungsten. So, on top of being relatively strong, it was resilient against incredible amounts of heat, which was exactly what Alex needed at the moment.

Ice Iron, Pale Onyx, and Violet Obsidian were something Alex had asked the mad immortal to gather. As for the 100 tons of Tungsten, Alex spent the next few days smelting and refining it.

In about 2 weeks, he was finally ready with all the ingredients to finally make the cauldron.

Alex realized that he had too much metal to work at once, so he needed to do it in part. He needed to do it all in 10 parts where each part would have 16 tons altogether.

That way, everything could fit in the forge where Alex could merge the 4 different metals in an alloy.

Making an alloy required precise amounts of the parts, and then Alex had to mix them together as smoothly as he could.

Most of it was fine thanks to Alex's use of Daos, but he couldn't help but find it annoying at how much mental strength it required for the task.

He hadn't noticed it back when he made Midnight, but now the weight of the ingredients was 20 times that of Midnight, so Alex was definitely feeling the struggle.

"If I was making these all together, I would have definitely not been able to make it at once," he thought.

One by one, Alex made 10 different blocks of the tungsten alloy which he then compounded until it was 16th times as small as the original one.

With 16 times less volume, the alloy finally became usable as a whole.

So, Alex finally mixed all 160 tons of the alloy together on top of the anvil and started tempering it.

The rhythmic strikes of the hammer rang in the room as Alex continuously struck the metal alloy. He struck it so much that he fell into a zone where all he heard was the rhythm that he followed while hitting the alloy.

Alex didn't realize how much time had passed before he heard a clear ringing sound from the metal, letting him know that it had been properly tempered.

Alex stopped and walked away from the glowing hot metal and took a deep breath as he was done with the hard part of the task.

Now, it was time to design a cauldron.

Alex had seen many different cauldrons and knew many shapes, but the one he cared about was still the one his master had given him.

He wasn't an artistic person anyway, so the best he could do was copy what the others had done.

Alex closed his eyes and remembered the broken cauldron. He had used it so many times that he knew it's every nook and corner.

He knew its rough inside, its golden edges, and its jade handles. He knew its sharp ridges, its swirly designs, and its three curved legs at the bottom.

Alex's hands moved as the Doa of heat and Dao of Metal worked at once. The heat made the metal soft enough to mold, and the metal dao did the molding.

Alex created a sphere out of the molten alloy on the anvil. The sphere was hollow and that would be the main body of the cauldron.

He cut off the top of the cauldron, which would become its lid. He made the top a little wider and curved.

He created 3 legs at the bottom for the cauldron to stand on. He made the ridges, the edges, the handles. He added the designs and whatever else he could remember.

As the cauldrons slowly started taking shape and were all but done, Alex finally put in the Qi lines.

The Qi lines wouldn't do anything but make it easier for the Qi to pass through to the ingredients on the inside.

As he put in the Qi lines, Alex immediately pulled out a bit of blood as well and poured it onto the cauldron as well.

As he did, he felt another bit of his spirit and soul get taken away by the cauldron.

"Wait, are you blood refining this too?" Godslayer asked with a hint of shock in his voice. "Your soul might get hurt if you do too much."

"It's fine," Alex said. "I feel fine."

"Well... if you feel fine, then maybe it is fine. But still, don't do that again. You will seriously get hurt. I do not know what will happen to me if your soul gets hurt," Godslayer said.

"This is the last one, I promise," Alex said.

The cauldron got stronger than it was before and more durable in every way. Being blood-refined made it far better than how it would be without being refined.

Alex wondered if there was a new spirit in this newly formed cauldron too.

The hot cauldron was quickly cooled using water and only then could Alex see the final form of the cauldron he had just created.

"Wow... it looks so weird without the gold and green," he thought to himself. The cauldron was the spitting image of the cauldron that was given to him by his master, without the colors.

Instead of gold and green, the cauldron was instead gray and sparkling.

Alex put on the lid and slowly lifted it with his Qi. "Oh thank god," he thought. After being refined, the cauldron felt incredibly lighter than it actually was.

He had been worried that it would be something that couldn't be easily moved, but it turned out to be plenty portable to his Qi.

"That's a relief," he thought.

He expanded the cauldron to test it out. The cauldron which was already one of the bigger cauldrons Alex had seen, became 16 times as large when expanded.

The cauldron filled the room easily with its massively hollow size, which Alex had to quickly shrink down.

"This is incredible," he thought. "Now I must give you a name."

Alex thought for a bit and gave it a name he thought fit it best.

"Memory".

Chapter 984: Surviving a Lightning Strike

"Memory? A memory of who?" Godslayer asked.

Alex couldn't help but get melancholic. "My master," he said. "She taught me alchemy and treated me like her own son. If not for her, I would've been a dumb little kid who went by his days knowing nothing about cultivation. Maybe I would've even died by now."

"Did she die?" Godslayer asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "An untimely death. She died trying to protect me from someone that wanted my body to turn me into a clone."

"I see," Godslayer said. "Then it's a good name."

Alex nodded. He looked at the gray color and shook his head. "I will need to paint it to make it look better."

"What colors do you plan on using?" Godslayer asked.

"Green and Yellow," Alex said.

"Like your previous cauldron?" he asked.

"Oh... I didn't realize I was going for the same color," Alex said. "I actually intended to use Green and Yellow because they are the colors of the robes of the Hong Wu sect and the Tiger sect, the only two sects that I will ever consider myself a disciple of."

"Although I will have to do that later. I don't have any colors for now," Alex said. "Besides, I need to focus on making pills that succeed in their tribulation soon. If not, the madman might just kill me."

Alex kept everything away and took some time to rest. After he was done resting, he began preparation.

He had to pass the tribulation, yes, but before that, he needed to do something else. He needed to break through.

Alex had spent close to 15 months in this place, and while it was too quick for him to breakthrough in his heart, he needed a change in himself so that the old man wasn't suspicious when he did manage to finally make a pill that he could protect from the lightning.

After a day of preparation, he finally started his breakthrough and was done with it in just a few hours.

"That was quite easy," he thought to himself. While he hadn't strained himself and his cultivation through fighting, he had done so with alchemy and blacksmithing. The amount of effort it took to make a single sword with Starforged Tungsten in it was akin to fighting a Saint Foundation realm beast for a long time.

Alex rested for a few more hours and began making the pill once more. This time, he was prepared to protect the pill from the lightning.

He put Memory on the stove and started heating it. With how high a boiling point the Starforged Tungsten had, Alex, could pour all the heat into it without worrying.

However, it did become worrisome when he realized that he truly needed a lot of heat. "Geez, 160 Tons of metal can't really be heated that easily can it?" he thought.

Fortunately, Alex didn't have to heat up the cauldron all alone. With a wave of his hand, he could use his Dao to make the world heat it up for him.

Once the cauldron was sufficiently heated up, Alex teleported in the first ingredient and started refining it.

Since this was the first time he was making said pill, he was very afraid of what he might do wrong. However, to his surprise, everything went relatively well.

He wasn't used to the rate of change of heat on a 160-ton weighing cauldron, so he needed a little more time to completely change the temperature than previous times.

Still, it did not cause any problem at all, and Alex was successful in making two pills, out of which one reached 100%.

Then, the cloud started forming over his head again.

The old man had been away, resting since doing anything hurt his wounds. He hadn't felt this much relief in over a year, and finally, when the pain was going down, he felt the change in energy close by.

The last time this had happened, the old man had realized that Alex had learned a dao. However, this time he sensed it was different.

'Oh, it's the pill cloud,' he thought. For something that was supposed to save his life, he wasn't very enthusiastic at all.

After all, all the enthusiasm he had before had gone down the drain ever since he realized that Alex was simply too weak to be able to help him.

'He's just wasting ingredients at this point,' the old man thought. Still, there was that hint of hope, that tiny little thing that told him deep down that there was a chance.

And as such, he could not help but want to go see what happened. His mind told him to ignore what was happening and rest, but his heart told him to go because... who knew what would happen.

"Dammit!" the old man cursed and stood up. As soon as he did, anger filled his heart as the pain flared over the right side of his body. His burned meridians stung like ten thousand bolts of lightning striking at once.

His flesh burned like when he had been charred by a lightning bolt. His mind involuntarily remembered the 6th lightning bolt that fell from the sky.

He had managed to survive the first 5, but it was the 6th one that had put this wound on him.

"Ugh!" he quickly shook away any of the memories from his past. He did not want to recall the failure that cost him not just his body, but also the lives of many of his sect's elders and the sect's longevity.

He did not want to remember the lightning bolt that signaled the downfall of his sect.

The old man painfully spread his spiritual sense out of himself. The pain he had forgotten for the past 3 months was once more normal for him just as it had become for the past 8 thousand years.

The old man saw Alex prepare his Qi to block the lightning bolt and was surprised to see the new strength of his cultivation base.

"Oh, he broke through?" the old man thought. With this single change, the hope in his heart grew even more and without stopping for a single second, he moved.

Space seemed to contract on itself to the point where the old man and the door to Alex's room were merely a meter apart.

The old man then took a single step and arrived next to the door at which point the space expanded back to its original size.

To a normal eye, it would seem as if the old man had teleported, but all he had done was take a single step that would've been several steps instead.

The moment he arrived at the door, the lightning fell into the room and struck the pill that Alex was making.

The sound of the lightning bolt sent a resounding boom reverberating through the room, which only lost its loudness a few seconds later.

The old man frowned when he heard that and looked back inside. When he saw the intact cauldron, his eyes narrowed.

When he saw the intact pill, his eyes went wide.

Alex was preparing to cover the pill once again when the door burst open.

"Pull it out!" the old man said.

Alex jumped a little at the suddenness of the old man's arrival.

"Sorry?" he asked.

"Pull out the pill. Don't protect it," the old man said.

Alex hesitated for a split second before pulling the pills out of the cauldron. As soon as he did, the pill cloud in the sky dissipated as if the tribulation had ended.

Alex couldn't help but be internally thankful for the old man's arrival. He had no idea what he was supposed to do at this point and was going to protect the pill again.

However, this time around, he would have to use his true cultivation base strength to possibly protect the pill, and even then he wasn't certain if he could or not. He had yet to see the strength of the second lightning after all.

"Show me!" the old man came up to Alex in a hurry.

Alex nodded and slowly opened up his fingers to reveal the pills he had made.

He had made two pills, one of which was a plain pill that had reached 98% harmony. Normally, it would reach 99% or even 100%, but he had made a few mistakes which ended up lowering it by 2%.

However, no one cared about the pill. It was the second pill that both Alex and the old man cared about.

This pill was in every way the same as the other pill. The color, the texture, the smell, and the size, everything was the same as the one from the other pill.

However, there was one distinct feature in it that separated it from the normal pill.

Along one of the sides of the pill, there was a lightning scar on the pill, from surviving the lightning bolt from the pill cloud.

The lightning scar was bluish-black. It started on one side with a thick base that got thinner and thinner the more it went along, branching into various routes as if a lightning bolt in the sky.

There was enough space for 8 more such scars on the pill, which would be filled each time the pill survived one of the lightning bolts from the pill cloud, at which point the pill would have successfully survived the pill cloud.

Alex looked at the scar, and since the pill would always have 100% harmony, a new word came to his mind to classify the type of pill he had made.

Before he could say it out loud, the old man spoke the words.

"Pill Vein."

Chapter 985: Pill Vein

"Pill vein..." Alex repeated the old man in awe.

"Yes, pill vein. That is what you call this lightning scar on the pill. If I remember correctly, the lightning is supposed to have improved the pill at some level. Each lightning strikes contains worldly energy that improves the pill until it reaches the next level," the old man said.

"What about after all 9 lightning strikes fall and the pill still survives?" Alex asked.

The old man simply shrugged. "I don't know. Founder never told me anything," he said.

The pill in Alex's hand flew over to the old man who looked at it for a while and took a deep breath.

Without waiting, he put the pill in his mouth and swallowed.

Both he and Alex waited for the pill to take effect. However, even after waiting for an entire minute, nothing happened.

"It's useless!" the old man's face suddenly turned dark as the hopes and expectations he had gathered regarding the pill shattered into a million different pieces.

"It didn't work?" Alex asked. "But it had a pill vein."

"I need pills with more pill veins," he said begrudgingly. He had truly wanted this to work, but the single pill was enough to tell him that a single veined pill was simply too weak to heal him..

"But that will..." he really didn't want to know how long it would take him if he was to keep faking his strength.

"What was that strength that you showed just now? 5th Saint Condensation realm?" the old man asked.

Alex frowned internally. 'I shouldn't have made the strength so obvious,' he thought. But then he couldn't save the pill, which was what he wanted.

"I ate a pill before this that improved my Qi strength by 2 realms," Alex said. "That was how I produced such a result."

"Yeah, I guessed so," the old man said. "It had to be some forbidden skill or pill with delayed consequences. Will you be alright?"

"I can handle whatever comes my way," Alex said.

"Good," the old man said. "You will no longer be making any healing pill for the next 8 years."

"Huh?" Alex looked at the old man.

"You are only wasting the ingredients by making pills that won't heal me. Instead, I want you to save the ingredients for after you are done reaching a cultivation base that can make better use of it," the old man said.

"You mean... I have to sit around, doing nothing but cultivating for the next 8 years?" Alex asked with dumbfounded shock on his face.

"Yes," the old man said. "I'm going into closed cultivation. Be on your best behavior for the next 8 years."

The old man left the room, leaving Alex all alone.

8 years. He was supposed to spend 8 years, trapped in a room. What the hell was he supposed to do for the next 8 years?

'And he's going into closed cultivation. I can't even ask him to bring me some things,' he thought. 'God dammit!'

He wanted to voice his thoughts out loud, but he couldn't trust the sanity of a madman to save him from his insane side.

All he could do was sit there until his shock faded and the reality of the situation hit him like a giant rock.

"What in the actual hell am I really supposed to do?" Alex shouted out in anger. He didn't even care if the old man heard him, but from the looks of it, he hadn't.

"I can't even leave this god forsaken place without healing the old man because of our oath," he thought with the rage still building up in his voice.

Alex raged around a bit, but in the end, he was forced to accept the reality. He was stuck in this place for the next 8 years and there was no way out.

He was now a prisoner of the old man.

"Dammit!" he said softly and started cultivating to calm himself.

A day later, he finished cultivating. After he stopped, he almost went back to making the pills, but he stopped.

'I can't make healing pills for the next 8 years,' he thought. He put away the cauldron as there was nothing else to do.

Despair filled Alex for the first few days, but after a while, he got used to the despair. With how strong the formation walls were, it was certain he wouldn't be leaving without making a commotion.

With how strong the old man was, it was certain he wouldn't be leaving at all.

Alex sighed and decided to try on things he had been ignoring for a while now. Since he was going to be staying here for a while and since the old man had gone to closed cultivation, he no longer saw a need to keep Pearl and Whisker from coming out.

Even without keeping them hostage, he was already forced to make a healing pill for them anyway.

He simply hoped that the old man did not see the peculiarities of his two beasts and decide to take them for himself.

Pearl hadn't cultivated in a long time and still was in the Saint Condensation 1st realm. However, for the past year and more, Alex had been cultivating his Undying Physique, which had helped Whisker reach a cultivation base of True Disciple 7th realm.

With how slow his cultivation base was, it was certain he would need awhile to show any sort of improvement.

Pearl looked around in confusion, wondering where he was.

"I haven't come out in a long while," Pearl said.

"Sorry, we've been in a rather unfortunate situation. I've been kidnapped, so I couldn't bring you out earlier," Alex said.

"Kidnapped? By who?" Pearl asked.

"A very strong man who wants me to make pills for him," Alex replied. He explained the situation briefly before stopping the conversation altogether. He didn't want the madman to hear him speak about him.

Pearl had nothing to do once he was out, so he quickly started cultivating. Alex was quite thankful for that as Pearl cultivating was the only way for him to body cultivate at this point.

He did what he could to hide the cuts in his body, but they would show no matter what as his body and Pearl's cultivation base were practically the same.

While Pearl cultivated on his own, Alex decided to give Whisker the Winter Moon cultivation technique which he could learn during the times when he wasn't practicing the Undying physique.

While the Winter Moon cultivation technique wasn't the best Yin cultivation technique out there, it was all Alex had and could only give that to him.

After that, all they could do was sit around and cultivate.

After a few days, Alex remembered that he needed to sharpen Midnight, so he asked Pearl to help him in doing so.

With his dao of Sharpness, Pearl was able to make it quite sharp. Still, to make it even sharper, he would need to have a far stronger cultivation base than the one he had at the moment.

Alex put back the sword and went on to cultivate again. He didn't know how he was going to spend the next 8 years exactly, but he was certain that as long as the three of them were together, time would go by in a flash.

Chapter 986: A Few Things to Try

Alex let Pearl do whatever he wanted. Pearl didn't really have anything to do in a confined room, so he cultivated all day long.

Whisker, however, was in his element. Alex gave him a cauldron and some ingredients and had him make pills.

He watched over his techniques and skills in making pills and was pleasantly happy when he saw the Whisker was very good now at making pills. He was still only making pills without around 40% harmony, but that was only because Alex was giving him the bad recipes, instead of the fixed ones.

He wanted Whisker to start from the bottom like everyone else would, and struggle the same way a normal alchemist would, something he never got to experience.

He didn't know if helping someone this early on with an easy way out with ingredients and recipes was even a good idea or not.

If it turned out that it only made Whisker more demotivated towards Alchemy, then he would certainly give better ingredients and recipes.

For now, Whisker was trying his hardest, so Alex didn't see the necessity to help him immediately.

While his two beasts were busy doing that, Alex went on to training on his own. He had a few things he had been wanting to try for quite some while now.

One of the things was that he wanted to try reaching the highest grade of pill veins, the 9 Pill veins with True rank ingredients.

However, if he called on the 9 lightning bolts while the old man was in closed cultivation and he forced him to leave only to find out that he was making True rank pills, he would certainly be madder than he already was.

He didn't want to lose his life just yet.

Other than that, Alex had something else he had been wanting to do for a very long time, and only now was he starting to find the motivation to.

And with 8 years to spare, Alex thought he had enough time to spare for it.

He wanted to make pills with everything being the same, but with one ingredient changed to something similar.

For example, he would follow the recipe of the Body Regeneration pill, but because Blood Spirit Lily was hard to acquire, he would replace it with something else that was neutral but had a blood aura in it.

Alex wanted to try similar stuff just in case he ever had to make pills where he had all ingredients but one. In those cases, he would know whether changing a single ingredient was a good idea or not.

Even if it was a good idea, and it did work, he would still have to make a pill that was somewhat as capable as the pill with the actual recipe.

If venturing down that route was a dead end, then he wanted to know about it now, rather than realize it when he was desperate. He could only imagine how unpleasant that feeling would be.

So, Alex started testing with the Body Regeneration pill and as for the ingredient that was to be exchanged in place of Blood Spirit Ginseng, he used an ingredient with its neutral energy structure as close to the Blood Spirit Ginseng as possible and then let it stay overnight in his blood.

Alex did this for a few months and came to a few conclusions.

The most important conclusion was that he did not understand how it worked. He could make it work very often, but almost always, he had no way of telling prior to making the pill whether the new pill would be better, worse, or the same.

It was simply impossible to guess it from the start. Or at least, it wasn't possible for the current Alex who didn't have much experience.

Still, after months of testing, he could now quite confidently say which ingredient would work, and which wouldn't.

He was not surprised when he found out that the clue was hidden in the ingredients themselves. Each ingredient had its unique energy composition.

All one had to do was look for a pill with a composition that was close enough to the original ingredient. As long as that was possible, he could swap the ingredients on any pill recipe without any worry of failure.

After a few months of testing this, Alex moved on to the other things he wanted to try.

He tried making new pills using the ingredients he had. The last time he had done it was when this world was still a game in the eyes of his clone that controlled him most of the time.

The memories were his, and thus he now remembered making the pills on nothing but simply at the fact that he couldn't let the energies go out of control.

He didn't know what energy the ingredients were before he began. Hell, he didn't even know what the ingredients did. He simply went along based on his tiny understanding of Alchemy at the time and couldn't help but be surprised at the fact that he came across 3 usable pills.

This time, it was a little easier than before as he didn't have to worry about making things he did not know about.

With the many knowledge about the ingredients he had, even if he didn't know what they would do together, he would have a general idea of whether it would be bad or not.

Depending on which would become the main ingredients, and which would become the side ingredients, he could cook up a pill that did a specific little thing that would be a combination or amplification of what the ingredients would do.

He would be happy if it was the latter one, as he wouldn't be very sure what the result of various ingredients combined would bring.

He could never know when two healing ingredients mixed together would suddenly become poison.

'I definitely need more information about these ingredients,' he thought. Luckily, he had such information in his head now and was only waiting to learn it before he could remember it easily too.

A few months more passed and before Alex knew it, he had been here for 2 years. In that time, he had made exactly 3 important pills.

One of those pills was a healing pill that he had made from entirely new ingredients that he had never interacted with but had found in the Beast realm.

Of the other two pills, one was supposed to be a poisonous pill, meant to kill saints that ate it. Alex couldn't tell how potent it was however as his body would destroy the poison the moment he digested it.

The last pill was one that numbed your mind, making you more susceptible to mental influence.

Alex had wondered if there was even merit to this pill with a positive aspect to it. The only thing he could think of was giving the pill to some enemy and having them eat it so you could control their mind.

However, when he thought about it, he realized that it could be used positively as well. One could eat the pill before trying to learn a dao on their own to get an effect that wasn't far off from what the Soul Elucidating tulips gave a person.

"I suppose it depends on how the pill is made," he thought in the end before proceeding with making the pill.

After being done with switching ingredients in recipes to straight up creating new recipes, Alex started feeling a lack of motivation to work on anything else.

In his free time, the reality of his situation would come upon him and he couldn't help but think about how worried his aunt might be. His mother wasn't in a different scenario either.

She had lost her son for over 7 years now. He wondered if she thought he was dead. He wouldn't be surprised if she did, but he didn't believe so.

His mother wasn't so feeble-minded to think her son wouldn't return to her soon enough.

He wanted to return back to them right now, but he was being kept hostage by the madman. That only made him angrier at the moment.

If only he wasn't cursed, he could have tried his all to leave, but he couldn't even do that.

"I definitely need to find some way to come out of this situation for sure."

Chapter 987: 8 Years

Alex was surprised at how quickly the years passed. But then, he had also achieved many things in the past 8 years.

His cultivation base had improved 5 more times, reaching Saint Condensation 8th realm. Pearl's had improved to Saint Condensation 4th realm, and Whisker's had improved to True Lord 3rd realm.

Alex was happy with the progress he had made, but he was also sad that he had to make such progress by simply staying in a room, locked for a very long time.

This sort of closed cultivation was something he would only ever expect from people that were at the end of their lives or someone who was trying very hard to reach the next cultivation realm despite their talents.

Fortunately, he hadn't wasted the years and had actually progressed in various other places too.

He had made many different new pills, some he knew were useful, some were useless at first thought, but could be useful if it was ever needed.

He practiced quite a lot regarding making pills with missing ingredients, while also learning to make a certain type of pill from scratch.

He was now somewhat confident that if someone asked him to make a pill that did one specific thing, at the very least, he could list out most of the ingredients that would go into the pill.

Aside from things related to Alchemy, he practiced some more about formations and talismans as well as runes on his own. He learned how to add runes to objects and added runes for durability and sturdiness to Memory.

These runes usually required some sort of power source, which in most cases would be Saint spirit stones, but in Alex's case, he could simply use his Qi to activate it.

He doubted he could see the effectiveness of the runes right now with how strong Memory was without it, but as his alchemy improved, it was certain he would need a strong cauldron to handle the higher level of lightning strikes from Pill Clouds.

Alex had also focused heavily on artifacts, creating quite a few more swords.

He never made another sword like Midnight as the cost alone was something he couldn't handle. He needed 21 swords at the very least for his 21 Sword Array to work, so he melted the previous swords he had made.

As for improving that technique and using more swords, he decided to do so after he had come up with a better technique. He could always have more ores from the Endless Tunnel after all.

After combining the metal with the newly tempered tungsten, he crafted 20 new swords, all of the same design as Midnight, but with nearly half its weight and quite worse all around as the likelihood of them gaining a sword spirit was nonexistent.

Alex had Pearl help him with Sharpening the sword the first few times, but after a few times, he understood the concept behind Sharpness and learned its Dao as well.

After that, he could do a better job at sharpening things than Pearl due to his stronger Qi. Still, he couldn't help but frown at how hard it was. Shen Jing had made it look so easy.

There was another Dao Alex could learn, but every time the worldly laws tried to descend, he forced them away by not deciding to think more about it. He knew he was just a hair's breadth away, but that was all he had from stopping the old man know that he was capable of that Dao.

That was one thing he had been keeping up his sleeve, just in case.

As for his Dao of technique, he had still not learned. That did not mean that he had no progress at all.

Alex had not only managed to separate the four types of meridians that were at the base of any Spiritual root, but he had also learned what most of the other branching meridians all over his body could do.

He categorized the four types into being used for four distinct types of techniques.

One was a cultivation path. It was the path that did not let the Qi go out of the meridian and instead used it to either improve something in his body or gather up more Qi from the outside.

The second one was a controlling path. It was when one could use Qi to control something. Lifting things with Qi, controlling light to go invisible, etc was what he assigned with this path.

The third path was for reinforcing stuff, whether it was his body or weapon. Usually, the purpose of it would be to add strength and defense to whatever he was using, but it could also be to add certain elements to the object.

Finally, the last path was for when you created things, whether it was sword slashes, palms, punches, fire, etc. This was perhaps the path with the most use.

Alex was able to separate the four paths and noticed that each of these 4 paths never actually intertwined with the other.

There were thousands of meridians for each spiritual root, but he was not only able to separate them by the spiritual roots, but he could also further separate them into four groups with each path of the spiritual root having its own meridians.

Doing this, Alex was starting to understand that he could in fact copy what he did with one technique and bring it to another spiritual root and use it there.

As of yet, he had succeeded in turning the Yang elemental attack 'Palm of the Sun' into a metal attack, and the Earth Devour technique into a Water Devour Technique.

He was able to change them because the techniques were close enough and the elements had the same properties in a sense.

He could not make water explode or wind heal. He couldn't make metal burn or fire sharp. He couldn't make Yin give life and Yang take it away.

He still had more to learn regarding all of the various paths, but he also needed to learn more about what each element was capable of.

After all, one of the things required to make everything work was Intent. If he did not know how something worked, he couldn't ever produce the intent to use it.

The progress had been slow for him, but he had progressed. If he had 5 or more years, Alex was certain he could practice enough to learn about everything required in the Dao of techniques.

However, one thing he had not been successful in despite having 8 years for it was a way to find himself out of his current situation.

He and Godslayer spoke a lot about what they could do, but with Alex's oath binding him, there wasn't a single thing he could do to get out of the situation without healing him.

The situation was so bad that if the old man ever died while resting, Alex would have to kill himself for failing to heal the old man.

There was simply nothing else he could do. But healing the old man was the last thing Alex wanted to do.

He could only imagine the pain and tragedy that could come from the old man being back in power. A pseudo-immortal roaming the world, unobstructed from heaven for he had already been judged for the power he held now.

Even if the old man kept his word and left him safe, he could imagine the many people that would die. The various elders from the different sects would most certainly die.

"But what can I do except healing him?" Alex thought. The only thing he could really count on at the moment was for the old man to free him from his oath for his own survival.

But then again, could he really count on a madman?

The door opened and Alex looked up. After 8 years, the door had finally opened up and the old man had come back.

"Oh, I didn't realize you had friends," he said when he saw Pearl and Whisker next to him.

Alex quickly took them back into their beast space and looked at the old man. "You're out?" he asked.

"Yes," the old man said with a rather happy face. "And I see that you have improved, as per my instructions."

"I have," Alex said.

"I hope, for your sake, that it is enough," the old man said.

Chapter 988: Seeing Aura

"Bring out your cauldron," the old man said. "It is time to see if you can acquire more than a single pill vein."

Alex nodded and brought out his cauldron. He had prepared many ingredients for this very moment. He started heating up the cauldron while he glanced towards the old man from time to time.

It had been 8 years since the last time he had seen the old man, and the things he noticed regarding the old man had changed quite a bit as well.

The old man still had a very high cultivation base for Alex to even sense the slightest bit of it. But, he didn't need to sense someone to see how strong they were.

He could see it.

His purple eyes seemed to glow in the firelight as they looked at the aura around the old man. Being unable to do anything to hide the leaking aura, he saw it all.

He could see the green and black aura. They were the Qi that was coming out of the old man's dantian, and Alex could see them with his naked eyes.

After all, one of the things he had managed to advance upon in the last 8 years was his Demon Eyes.

At stage 2, his eyes could now see elemental energy and aura for what they were in different colors.

Red was for fire, blue for water, green for wood, and so on. Alex knew all the 7 various element's colors. He also saw the crimson color for blood.

As for space, it had no color from what he could see. But then, space was something that was related to the third stage of his eyes, so maybe he would see the color after he reached that.

Alex looked at the old man's green aura and knew it was related to wood. But the black aura was weird. It wasn't simply black like it would be for yin.

It was pitch black and very thick. Which Alex associated with a single thing.

'Death aura,' he thought. 'Of course, the old man's death aura must be quite high.'

The old man was simply too strong for him to sense something in him without touching him, so only now was he realizing it.

'Could I perhaps pump enough death aura in him to ki—' Alex stopped thinking as power seemed to wrap around his neck, strangling him.

'Shit, I can't think about that. I have to heal him,' he thought. The oath was simply too powerful for him to think of doing anything that could deviate him from healing the old man.

Still, learning that the old man had a lot of death aura could be quite a helpful hint he had been missing for a long time.

He quickly told Godslayer who gave him a disappointing answer. "If I could help you with that, I would, but the old man dying is the last thing you should be thinking about. Because the moment he dies, you die too."

'Sigh, I know,' Alex thought. That was still one more piece of information than what he had before so he didn't lose hope yet.

"Don't forget to eat your pill before you start," the old man said. Alex nodded and took out a random pill to eat, which he acted like would improve his cultivation base by 2 realms.

He then started making the pill as he put in the ingredients one by one. He was very familiar with the pills now, and it was even easier for him as both his cultivation base and his spiritual energy had improved vastly in the last 8 years.

It didn't take much out of him as he completed making the pills and one of them had 100% Harmony in it.

Immediately, the room was filled with miniature storm clouds that crackled with lightning. The old man felt uneasy when he saw the lightning but did nothing to show his fear.

Alex covered the pill with a portion of his Qi to protect it from the lightning bolt. The first bolt of lightning dropped from the ceiling and struck the pill.

Fortunately, Alex's protection was strong enough for the pill to survive. However, it wasn't over yet as the lightning would still strike 8 more times.

His Saint Foundation 1st realm strength could most likely protect the pill against the next strike. Alex hadn't tried it yet, but he had a feeling it could.

He was cautiously optimistic as he covered the pill with his energy again. The lightning struck once more and fortunately, the pill survived, barely.

Alex knew that if he did not increase his energy, he could not protect the pill against the next strike.

"Senior, this is all I can do," he said. "The pill will get destroyed."

"No, continue it," the old man said. He wasn't worried about the pill getting destroyed at all. If it did, he would just ask Alex to make another one. But if it did survive, then that was so much more chance for him to heal.

Alex wanted to let go, but he didn't. If it was destroyed then it would be the old man's fault after all.

He continued protecting the pill and as expected, it was destroyed. Alex slumped back as he breathed heavily to show the fatigue he had gone through. It wasn't as bad, but he had to exaggerate it.

"Good cauldron," the old man complimented. "Start again."

Alex frowned. "Let me rest a few moments, senior," he said.

"No, start again. You barely used any Qi last time," the old man said. Being close to healing himself had made him care less about Alex.

Alex frowned but did as asked. He stood back up and started making the pill again.

Once again, he made another pill that called down the lightning. He easily defended against the first strike, and barely defended against the second one.

He then brought out the pill immediately to show the two intertwining lightning scars on it, or as it was called in Alchemy terms, Pill veins.

"Here you go, senior," Alex said.

"Good job," the old man said. "Not great, but good."

Alex felt a pang of anger when he heard that. Not only did he have to make a pill, but he also had to suffer from unnecessary judgment by a man that relied on him to survive.

'If only I could kill him after healing him,' he thought.

"Haha, you can't," Godslayer said. "You would need an immortal to win against him. Do you know any?"

"Of course I do," Alex said.

"Not that cat lady," Godslayer said.

"I know. I know a different one too," he said.

"Oh, you do?" Godslayer asked curiously.

Alex didn't say anything. Talking about the four heavenly beasts was not something he wanted to do with Godslayer since he would immediately get mad at them and throw a whole fit.

He had in fact thought of asking the tortoise for help, but how could he? He could only leave here after he had healed the old man. Then, he would have to somehow get away from his clutches and find a way to the Ruler's Domain where the tortoise lived.

Then he would have to get past the fact that the tortoise was wounded. He would have to have a pill with so many pill veins that it could heal an actual immortal.

After that, he would have to wait for the tortoise to go through Heavenly Judgment, which last he remembered had most likely killed Lady Ren. The tortoise would most likely survive, but even then Alex would have to heal him again.

In that period of time, the madman will have done all the destruction he could.

So, there was simply no way for Alex to place all of his hopes on the tortoise.

"The immortal I do know wouldn't be of much help to us," he said.

However, he could still be there when all else failed, so Alex hadn't exactly given up on the idea of healing the tortoise. Even if it was just as a form of common courtesy, he would help him heal.

The old man ate the pill in his hand and waited for it to heal him. He was very optimistic, and that was why he was even more disappointed when the pill failed.

"Dammit!" he cried out.

Alex could see the man's anger start to boil up, and he was worried that it would pour all over him. So before the man could even fully bring out his rage, he spoke.

"Senior, there might be a way to improve your chances of healing," he said.

"What?" the old man turned his head.

"I have a way to possibly help you heal better," Alex repeated.

"What do you mean?" the old man asked. His rage was dying down a bit because of just how confused he was.

"I never before noticed it, but now I do. Your body has a lot of death aura building up on it for a long while now. If you let it fester any longer, you will never be able to heal yourself. The life energy in these pills that are supposed to heal you would get eaten up by the death energy, making them practically useless," Alex said.

The old man couldn't find any lies in those words. "Are you sure?" he asked.

"I'm not entirely sure if that is the main cause or not, but I can guarantee you that it is part of it," Alex said.

The old man thought for a moment and nodded. "Go ahead, if you can do something about it, then do it."

Chapter 989: Memories of that Day

Alex put away the remaining pill and the cauldron before moving toward the old man. He reached close to him, and even then he couldn't sense the death aura that well.

However, his eyes could see the black aura that drifted downward from all over his body. So, when he tried to sense it, he easily found it.

He went behind the old man and placed his palm on the old man's back. The old man flinched a bit and Alex moved back.

"I'm sorry, does it hurt?" he asked.

"It's fine, do what you need to do," the old man said as he gritted his teeth. Alex touched his back again, and despite the pain, the old man didn't flinch. Still, Alex could see the struggle.

"There's a lot of death aura," he said. "It might take some time."

"Time is all I have," the old man said through his gritted teeth.

"I will start then," Alex said and slowly started taking away the death aura. He started off very slow as he wasn't sure if the death aura of a pseudo-immortal was too much for him to handle, so he had to be careful.

'It's quite strong,' he thought when the aura came flowing into him. It was a bit too strong. So much so that, Alex started wondering if his dao was enough to handle it efficiently.

"Give it to me!" Godslayer said. "I wish to consume the death."

"You won't act up, right?" he asked.

"Don't worry, it won't be nearly enough for me to regain the same strength that I had before you found me," Godslayer said.

"Alright then," Alex said, and using his Dao of Death, he started sending the death aura he gathered to Godslayer.

Godslayer ate it all up as if he hadn't eaten in a long time. He seemed incredibly hungry, but even then it would take a while before Alex could bring the death aura out of the old man.

"That's weird," Godslayer said. "Something is odd with his body."

"What's wrong?" Alex asked.

"Not sure, I can't really sense it all that well. I need more time," Godslayer said.

Alex nodded and decided to speed it up a little. He had only just increased the rate at which he drew in the death aura when the old man instinctively moved forward in pain and the absorption ended.

"I'm sorry. I should have let you know I was going to speed up," Alex said.

"Don't go too fast. My body cannot handle the pain as well," the old man said.

"Okay," Alex said and restarted the process. But with how slow he was going, it was going to take over half a day for sure.

"I'm surprised to see that you have such an obscure dao. I thought you only learned the dao related to artifacts in the last 8 years" the old man said.

Alex's eyes narrowed. 'I knew it,' he thought. The old man had in fact been keeping an eye on him while in closed cultivation this whole time. Even if not for him, he had to make sure that the others didn't come and take him away, or worse kill him.

'Good thing I didn't learn the dao immediately. He would've tightened the security even more,' Alex thought.

"How many dao do you actually know?" the old man asked.

"I know a few related to fire and metal," Alex said. " And this Death dao."

"Fire and Metal... why those?" the old man asked.

"Fire just because I'm used to making pills with them or working with artifacts. Same reason for metal. I have worked with them so much that I learned about them a bit. Although visiting the Ancient Battlefield did help quite a lot," he said.

"Yes, it does," the old man said. "What about the death Dao?"

"That... was something I had known for a while. I came incredibly close to dying multiple times and the memories traumatized me. At the same time, I also understood what it was like to die. After thinking about it for a while after reaching the Saint realm, I learned the dao."

"I see, you're lucky to have learned so many Dao," the old man said. "And incredibly unlucky as they will only make things worse for you."

Alex was a little confused. "Why do you say that?" he asked.

"The Dao you learn is not for free," the old man said. "This is an enormous debt you incur when you learn it. And when you try to break through to the immortal realms, the heavens come to ask for its payment. And it makes you pay with interest."

'Oh, that's what he's talking about,' Alex thought. Still, having the old man speak up about anything was a good thing.

"What do you mean exactly, senior?" he asked.

"You don't know? I'm talking about the lightning tribulation," he said. "The stronger the dao you learn the stronger the lightning will be. If you cannot withstand the lightning, you will..."

Alex looked at the wounds that crept up the old man's left side. "Senior must have learned a very strong Dao to be wounded like this," he said.

"Hah!" the old man shouted. "What strong dao? I couldn't even pass the normal 9 bolts of lightning."

He shook his head and felt the pain along his right side again.

"Senior, if you don't mind, can you tell me what happened that day? Was there someone that interfered with your breakthrough? Or was it just an accident?"

The old man stayed quiet and thought back to the day he lost it all. He didn't want to remember but the memories didn't follow his sentiment. They flooded his mind as he remembered every single aspect of that day clearly.

His eidetic memory was a curse for him at this moment.

"It was neither an interference," the old man said finally after staying quiet a long time. "Nor was it an accident."

"All it was... was a goddamn mistake made by a young, stupid me," the old man said.

"I was young. I didn't understand much. They told me I had the talent and the potential to reach the heavens. They told me I could one day become as strong as everyone ever had in history."

"I took that to heart. I thought I was truly gifted and I did not need anything else. I started off slow with my teacher and elder's teaching, but at some point, they weren't there anymore and I was all alone, and I could do whatever I want."

"I thought since I am so gifted, why do I have to worry about taking my time with my cultivation? Wasn't it good enough that I could just reach the next realm?"

"I was also in some part motivated thanks to the founder's story about the Immortal worlds. Even the trashiest of trash there had a great chance at becoming immortal, just because of the concentration of Qi in those worlds."

"If even trash could do so, what about me? I had the greatest of talents, so if I were to go there early, I would be able to reach the higher realms early too. Immortality is too enticing after all," the old man said.

"And... in doing so, I made the gravest mistake a cultivator could make before any major breakthrough. I had built myself a very weak foundation and there was no one there to correct me."

"So, when I started my breakthrough, that was when tragedy struck," the old man said. "I do not know whether it was my stupidity or my courage that took me past the Inner Demon. Some days I wish that I hadn't been able to. At least... the lightning wouldn't have arrived."

Alex continued taking in the death aura while hearing the old man's tale.

"The first lightning bolt was strong, but I was prepared for it. I knew they would be strong, and I handled it. But the second was even stronger, much more than I had thought it would."

"The third and the fourth ones were very much stronger and I was already suffering through them. When the fifth bolt fell, it hurt me so much, but I survived. However, I knew I could not survive the next one."

"So, when the 6th lightning bolt fell... it destroyed me. It charred the right half of my body, leaving it bleeding in the storm," the old man said. "That was the moment I knew I was going to die."

"So when I did, I couldn't help but run away. How stupid of me to think the lightning would stop. No, it followed me, right onto the main mountain of my sect."

"The elders came to help me, to heal me, and that was what the heavens considered interference. The next moment, thousands of lightning bolts fell from heaven, killing everyone around me, leaving only me alone."

"I... I didn't even feel anything when they died. I was too occupied with my own survival. I... if only I hadn't been so thoughtless, I might have been able to save them," the old man said. "or maybe... even just die, rather than live this painful life."

Alex didn't know what to say. The old man seemed to be in more pain than ever, but none of it was physical. He grieved his sect members that died due to his failure, and Alex was considerate enough to let him grieve.

However, there was someone else that wasn't as considerate.

"Holy shit!" Godslayer said after hearing the old man's recollection of the events from the past.

"What? What's wrong?" Alex asked.

"I think... this old man is actually not a False Immortal."

Chapter 990: False False Immortal

"Wait, what do you mean he's not a False Immortal?" Alex asked with a surprised look on his face. He even missed a bit and forgot to keep absorbing the death aura for a few moments.

Fortunately, the old man was too caught up in his own trauma to notice any changes around him.

"Godslayer, explain," Alex asked in his head.

"Ughh... it's hard to explain. Let me go at it from the top," he said.

"Wait," Alex said, stopping Godslayer. He then lifted his hands away from the old man.

"Urghh!" he made a small grunting sound.

"What's wrong? Was my death aura too hard to handle?" the old man asked.

"No, it's not the death aura," Alex said while still keeping a pained expression on his face. "The pill I ate before, its drawback is showing up. My meridians will flare for an hour or two now, making most of my Qi unusable."

"Oh, then..."

"I think you should go back, senior. I will need to refine this death aura anyway, so I should rest too. We should continue absorbing this tomorrow again," Alex said.

The old man slowly stood up and was surprised to feel a lot less pain than he was expecting. "That really works. I really did have a lot of death aura then," he said.

"You still do," Alex said. "You still have a lot, which should make you feel better once we remove it."

"Alright, I will come tomorrow. Rest, for now, don't make any pills in the meantime," the old man said.

"I won't," Alex said and watched the old man leave. Once he was gone, he slowly sat down and called out his two beasts before starting to cultivate with the two.

However, that was just a front for the talk that was shaking him from the core inside.

"Alright, explain now, in detail," Alex said as he appeared inside his mind. The silver mountain was visibly smaller than before, but Alex did not care for how much it changed.

No matter what changed about it, there was nothing happening to him that he could visibly link to the mountain anyway.

"Okay, let me ask you this first. What do you know about False Immortals?" the sword spirit asked.

Alex looked at him with a confused expression. "Just what you have told me until now, I guess? They are the people that have failed their breakthrough and can either no longer enter Immortality or choose not to."

"That is correct," Godslayer said. "And is there a way to tell if one False Immortal is stronger than the other, in the same way a Saint might be stronger than another Saint?"

"Umm... do False Immortals even have realms to go by?" Alex asked.

"That's exactly what I wanted you to learn. False Immortal don't have different realms because it's not a cultivation realm."

"False Immortal is a classification. Whether you survive and are the strongest being under the Immortal realms, or get beat up to half death and end up being a cripple, you are called a False Immortal all the same."

"Still, the regular people call the stronger failures False Immortal," Godslayer said.

"That... makes sense, but I don't understand your point. I hope you're going somewhere with this," Alex said.

"Of course I am. Just shut up and listen," Godslayer said. "Now, given the classification, you heard, would you call the old man a False Immortal?"

"Absolutely," Alex said. "He's someone who failed to break through to Immortality, so he is a False Immortal. Or are you using some weird context like 'he hasn't given up on immortality yet and can still try' to say that the old man is not a False Immortal?"

"Not exactly, but my logic is similar enough," Godslayer said. "Before I get there, however, let me ask you one question. Why are there barely any False Immortals in this world?"

Alex couldn't help but think deeply at the question. Why was it? He remembered the Black Tortoise telling him that the humans of this world had mixed their blood with the demon folks so much that they were basically a hybrid at this point with only the bad traits from the two.

However, if that were true, even if not all Saints could reach the peak, those that do should have failed just enough for there to be multiple False Immortals in this world.

Which meant one of two things was most likely happening. "There have been people who failed in their tribulation, but they either failed and died, or they failed and ended up as a cripple only to die not long after," Alex said.

"Then let me ask you this," Godslayer said. "What is a failure in this case?"

"Hmm... Inner Demons would only make you go through Qi deviation at best, so the failure should be the tribulation. They failed to survive the lightning strikes," Alex said.

"Yes. Now, what if I told you that when you start a lightning tribulation, 9 lightning bolts fall on you no matter what," Godslayer said. "More if they have dao."

"What if they don't have dao?" Alex asked.

"Then they won't even reach the peak of the Saint Transformation realm," Godslayer said. "The thing you should be focusing on is that people cannot complete their breakthrough without defeating at least the 9 lightning bolts for they are absolute. It is the dao lightning that you can choose to skip out on to fail that chance to break through."

Alex's eyes widened when he heard that. "Are you sure you're not misremembering?" he asked.

"Nonsense, I have tamed False Divinities and Celestials before. I would not be wrong about a simple False Immortal," Godslayer said.

"But... that doesn't make sense. If someone has to fight through all 9 lightning bolts to complete or fail their tribulation, then what the old man told us was a lie," Alex said. "Dammit, all that info and he lied."

"No," Godslayer said. "He did not lie. In fact, I was stupid enough to not have noticed before."

"Notice what?" Alex asked.

"Did you ever notice that for someone who is supposed to only be able to use Immortal Qi in this world with no Immortal Qi, his body had enough Qi to do stuff despite being over 8 thousand years old?" Godslayer asked.

Alex's eyes went wide. "Now that you mention it... that is weird. I was so focused on him having Immortal Qi that I didn't even question where he acquired it from."

"I should have known before, but I didn't give much thought to it. I only noticed the quality of his Qi when you drained his death aura. It's... not exactly Immortal, a little below that."

"I was confused about why that was at first. A Qi that was way stronger than Saint Qi, enough to be Immortal Qi, but not yet immortal Qi. If I'm not wrong, the old man can in fact collect Saint Qi, but his body, spirit, and Qi are so intertwined due to him being on his way to the Immortal realm that Saint Pills won't heal him."

"That begged the question in my mind as to why the old man even had a slightly weaker Qi in the first place compared to other False Immortals."

"Of course, the situation became much clearer when he explained it all himself," Godslayer said.

Alex thought for a moment as a realization hit him.

"When he said that he only survived 6 of the 9 lightning bolts that everyone is supposed to go through," Alex said as he understood what Godslayer was trying to say.

Everyone was supposed to take 9 lightning bolts regardless of if they could survive it or not. But the old man had only taken 6.

"Yes," Godslayer said. "I do not know how he could've done this. There are ways to pause your tribulations by using artifacts to conceal yourself, which he might have acquired from this so-called Founder of his."

"Nevertheless, calling this old man a False Immortal would be akin to saying that a half-made sword is a failure. You can't really label it that since it hasn't gone through it all, has it?"

"But we do know it will be a failure," Alex said. "If the sword had cracks forming on it halfway through, not able to handle even just the tempering phase of the process, the sword is a failure through and through. The only way to fix it would be to completely start the process from the beginning."

"The old man had already suffered from the 6th lightning, so there is nothing wrong with calling him a False Immortal in my eyes," Alex said. "I seriously doubt he had any method of surviving the last 3."

"One could argue with you for the first part, but that is not what you should be taking away from my words," Godslayer said. "You leave the tempering of a sword because it's a failure. But what if it heats back up?"

"So what? There's no point in continuing to temper the sword if I know it is a failure," Alex said.

"Yes, YOU see no point. But the heavens don't see it that way. If they see the metal glow hot, they will strike it again until it's either tempered or the metal shatters," Godslayer said.

As Alex heard that, his eyes started growing wide as he too understood what Godslayer was trying to say finally.

"What you're saying is... if the old man were to return to how he was before he was wounded, the tribulation that had stopped would continue... and he would die," he said.

"Yes," Godslayer said. "And for that to happen..."

"I will have to make the pill that will heal the old man completely," Alex thought.