

## Alchemy 991

### Chapter 991: Final Pill

"So I will have to heal the old man," Alex said to himself. "That... works surprisingly well for me. I won't have to break my oath at all."

But then, there was another problem that Alex needed to think about.

"Wait, if I heal him, is there a guarantee that the heavens will strike?" Alex asked.

"If he regains his previous cultivation base, yes," Godslayer said. "His cultivation is at a stage where the heavens can't stand him, and since he hasn't been fully tested yet, he will have to go through the tribulation."

"No, but you said he most likely has something to conceal himself, right? What if he conceals himself again?" Alex asked.

"Well, most artifacts that conceal you can do so for a short period of time. Maybe a month to a year at most. Most people use it to heal themselves in the time period they get, but this man chose to run."

"What if he has another one?" Alex asked. "Can he hide from it again?"

"There's no way someone from this backwater world can have two artifacts to hide themselves from the heavens," Godslayer said.

"What if they did?" Alex asked.

"No way," Godslayer said.

"But what if? Can you guarantee that he doesn't have one?" Alex asked.

"Arghh... no," Godslayer said.

"So we will have to be prepared for that too," Alex said. "Still, that's a very low chance so it probably won't matter. The more pressing question is what about us falling victim during the tribulation?"

"The prophecy I heard said that if I were to help him, I would die. What if that comes true?" Alex asked. "Just like before, what if he runs away from the tribulation and brings the lightning down on me too?"

"I told you to forget about the prophecies. Divinations are highly inaccurate," Godslayer said. "And if he does try to run away from the tribulation again? Simply don't engage with him. The heavens know who is helping and who is interfering, and they also know who is not."

"I see," Alex said.

"But, if he does start to attack you, then you will have to make sure not to fight back. Because that would be considered interfering," Godslayer said.

"So I will just have to run away. Got it," Alex said.

Still, there were some things he worried about, so he made some preparation. He talked with both Pearl and Whisker while cultivating overnight.

The next day, he made no pill. The old man wanted to get rid of all the death aura before they did anything, so he focused the time on gathering death aura.

Alex took in as much as he could while still leaving enough for 2 more days of work. He needed the time very much for what he was thinking of doing.

The old man returned, and Alex got back to planning as well. On the surface, he looked like he was simply cultivating, but on the inside, he was constantly communicating with Pearl and Whisker.

Godslayer was also in on the conversation, but there was nothing he could provide at the moment other than the information he already had.

Alex's preparation was around running away from the location he was in as that was the only thing he was concerned about. He needed to be as far away as possible when the old man's tribulation came.

He drew out the death aura for two more days and finally all of the old man's death aura was completely out.

The old man got up from his seat and looked around. "I... I truly feel amazing," he said. "I feel like I can heal even without the use of the pill."

"You should still eat the pill, senior," Alex said.

"Of course, of course," the old man said. "So, can you make the pill now? I can't wait for it."

"Tomorrow, senior," Alex said. "I will need to process this death aura for now."

The old man was a little disappointed when he heard that, but he nodded. "Yes, you need to be in the peak condition. Tomorrow then," he said.

The old man left and Alex was all alone again. He had a single night's worth of time to make sure he was fully prepared as he wouldn't have time tomorrow after the old man was healed.

He went over the plan again with everyone, planning every single step that could go both right and wrong.

So, when the day rolled around and it was time for him to finally make the pill, he was fearless as he was fully prepared.

"Bring out the cauldron," the old man said.

Alex nodded and pulled out his cauldron before starting to make a pill again. He had done it many times, so he was starting to get used to it very much.

He put in the ingredients one by one and started refining them all. The old man watched as the ingredients were powdered inside the cauldron.

Alex focused on the pills. Once he was done with this, he would be free, so he made no mistake.

At the end, when the Pill-splitting Qi rolled around the cauldron, forming two pills that collected all the energy, the pill cloud that formed above him let him know that he had not failed.

Alex put his Qi around the pill as the first lightning bolt struck it. The energy fully protected the pill from the lightning bolt as it gained the first Pill Vein.

Then, Alex protected it against the 2nd lightning bolt which fell a few moments later.

With the two pill veins on the pill, Alex stopped making the pill anymore and pulled out the pill with the pill veins.

The old man practically snatched it from his hands and ate it without any hesitation. The pill went down the old man's throat and into his stomach.

Alex waited with bated breath as he watched the wounds on the side of the old man. He could see the pill's energy dissipate through the skin and thought it was healing the old man.

However, it turned out that it was not. The energy in the pill, despite having some worldly energy, could not help the old man's body even when it did not have any death aura in it.

The old man frowned and so did Alex. The old man had been too excited, so when he realized that he wasn't healing, he couldn't help but be sad and angry.

As for Alex, he had planned this moment way too many times for the last few days to not succeed right now.

"You said it would work, kid," the old man said with gritted teeth. "If you had lied to me—"

"I am forced by my oath to do nothing but heal you senior. Believe me, I had every bit of hope that you would have succeeded at this moment," he said.

"Then what now? You wanna try one more time so I can fail one more time? Or do you want to break through a few more times before you try again? Do remember that you have less than a year before the oath is complete," the old man said.

"I know," Alex said. He thought for a bit and sighed. "Wait a few more minutes. I might have a way."

Chapter 992: 4 Veined Pill

"What can you do?" the old man asked curiously, despite the anger and frustration that was in his voice just moments ago.

"There is something I can do, but..." Alex thought for a bit. "Whatever, I will deal with the consequences later."

He sat back down and started making a pill again.

The old man watched curiously as to what Alex was going to do this time around.

Alex didn't do anything differently. He simply made the pill he was supposed to make and the pill clouds formed once again.

"What now?" the old man asked.

Alex didn't say anything and sent in his Qi to protect the pills. The first bolt of lightning fell from the skies and struck the cauldron.

One of the pills formed a lightning scar, but other than that, nothing happened. Alex breathed in and out as he prepared for the second lightning bolt to drop.

He watched the bolt fall onto his pill, but his pills were protected once more. Two pill veins had now formed on the pill.

The old man saw it too. "Now what? Am I to eat this pill again until it works?" he asked.

"Not yet," Alex said as he brought out Midnight.

The old man's eyes narrowed when he saw the sword. "No way you are going to fight the pill cloud, right?" he asked. The old man wasn't sure if that would work or not, but seeing that Alex was already incapable of protecting the pill from the 3rd lightning bolt, he didn't see how he could possibly protect against the third one now.

"I do not know if fighting works," Alex said. "It might, but I'm not in the position to make experiments."

As he said that, Alex took the sword and cut his palm. He then pulled away Memory's lid and dripped his blood inside, that surprisingly never heated up at all.

The old man was very confused at the moment. "What are you—"

Before his words were finished, the next lightning bolt fell from the pill clouds and struck the pill. However, this time, there was a layer of blood protecting it.

His blood aura was very strong now that it had improved in the nearly 10 years of Alex having been here.

So, when the lightning fell on the pill, all that happened was that it gained another Pill vein.

A 3-veined pill.

The old man was starting to get very excited at the prospect of eating this pill, but Alex wasn't done yet. His blood aura wasn't so weak that it could only protect the pill ones.

The 4th lightning bolt fell as the old man looked in awe. It struck the pill and couldn't do anything.

Alex looked inside and found that his blood had now lost most of its aura. He could probably protect the pill from another lightning bolt if he put in some more blood, but he wasn't sure about that.

So, it was better if he quit while he was ahead.

He pulled the pill out and the pill cloud disappeared. Before he could look at it, the old man snatched it away and looked at the pill with gleaming eyes as if he were looking at his own child.

"This will definitely do it," he said. "This will definitely heal me."

Alex looked at the old man whose madness was now showing its face again as he ate the pill without question.

Alex gave a mental note to Whisker to be ready.

The old man ate the pill and suddenly he fell to the ground in pain, unable to do anything.

"Senior?" Alex looked at him with fear in his eyes. Had he done something bad? Was the healing pill actually killing him by mistake?

If that were the case then the result would be his own death.

The prophecy rang in his head. He was going to help recover a fallen power, and in doing so that would cause his death.

Was this it? Was this what the prophecy meant?

Was the prophecy not that he would die at the hands of others that he helped, but rather it would be the helping part that killed him?

Fortunately, Alex was wrong for now as the old man actually was healing. He checked closely and realized that the old man's destroyed nerves had formed before anything else, so the pain from his still-wounded body had assaulted him all at once.

Slowly, the red wounds and charred skin started healing on their own as the old man's grunts and cries lowered quite a lot.

After 5 minutes of time, his breathing got natural as he was fully healed.

The old man lay on the ground with a wide smile on his face. "I... I healed," he said.

As soon as the man spoke, Alex felt the clutch around his throat that he had gotten used to by now vanish. No longer was an invisible force going to choke him out at any moment.

He was finally free of his oath.

However, he couldn't be happy at the moment. After all, the main event was going to start right now.

The old man got up, happy that he was healed. However, before he could express his happiness, a loud resounding boom could be heard from the sky outside.

The tribulation had come for the old man.



The old man's face darkened for a moment before it lightened up. "Oops, nearly forgot," he said as he pulled out a necklace from his storage bag and wore it around his neck.

Suddenly, Alex could no longer feel or sense the old man at all. It was as if his entire body had been shrouded in something that stopped him from being able to be sensed.

As a result, the tribulation that had appeared for a moment disappeared too.

Alex's eyes went wide when he saw that. 'Fuck!' he couldn't help but curse. This was the worst-case scenario.

"Now then, I don't think I can hold it off for much longer than a few months, so I should get to work," the old man said.

"Wh-what are you planning on doing now?" Alex asked.

The old man looked around. "Isn't it obvious? I am going to reclaim the continent for my own as it has always been rightfully mine," he said.

"What does that entail?" Alex asked.

"Well, I will have to kill the old geezers that destroyed my sect. Although most of them should have died already, so I will have to go after the others that tried to kill me not long ago. Yes, that should be a good starting point for my return," the old man said.

"You are going to kill people?" Alex asked. Internally, his mind churned as he tried to think of what he could do at the moment as it was obvious the old man would be doing this.

There was one thing he could do.

"Senior, it has been 8 thousand years since the Snow Immortal sect fell. Everyone that was involved in its downfall has most likely already died," Alex said. "Can't you just let the past be past and start anew?"

"No, I cannot," the old man said. "Not only did they destroy what remained of my sect, but they also tried to stop me from returning to power. The only reason I couldn't heal all these years was that they feared me and stopped alchemy from flourishing in the continent."

"I will show them exactly how right they were in fearing me," the old man said. "These big sects think there is no one bigger than them, don't they? I shall brand my name onto these 5 sects by destroying them all. I shall kill the disciples and elders in front of their ancestors before killing them too."

Alex's eyes went wide. He didn't think the old man would go this far.

"Innocent men and women will die if you do that," he said.

"Who cares about innocence? This is a world ruled by the strong. The only thing you can be is either strong or dead," the old man said.

"They were right in calling you mad," Alex said. Without hesitation, he pulled out a talisman from his storage ring and tried to send a message to his aunt to tell everyone to prepare.

However, before he could do so, the old man destroyed the talisman.

"You are trying to help them too?" he asked with disappointment in his eyes. "I thought you were going to be on my side. I even said I would make you my heir."

"I will never side with someone that thinks murdering innocents is justified just because they are strong." Alex glared back at the old man as he held Midnight in his hands.

"You're going to fight me?" he asked.

"I will," Alex said. He had no chance of winning but he would do whatever he could to wound the man.

The old man sighed and even chuckled a bit. "And here I thought I could use you to slowly make you spill all of your secrets."

The old man moved and while Alex's demon eyes saw what he was doing clearly, his body was far too slow to react.

The old man landed next to him and grabbed his right hand. Then, he grabbed his middle finger and ripped it off. And along with it, he took the storage ring.

"I guess I won't have to wait for you to spill all your secrets," the old man said as he pulled the ring out of the torn finger.

Alex didn't even flinch in pain at the missing finger. "What are you doing with that?" he asked.

"What?" the old man asked. "Did you think I wouldn't recognize a storage ring after you flaunt it over my face for so many years?"

### Chapter 993: Your One Mistake

Alex became flustered when he saw the old man take away his storage ring. That was where he had been keeping everything he owned so being taken away was the same as him losing his entire fortune.

"Give me back my ring," he shouted at the old man.

"Haha, do you think mere words will make me give you back your ring? Keep dreaming young man," the madman said as he tried to see what was inside the ring.

"Eh, you've refined it well. It's gonna take a few minutes for sure," he said. Just then, Alex moved.

Midnight grew thrice its size as Alex slashed it at the old man. The old man wasn't very worried, but when the sword did fall on him, he couldn't help but stagger a bit.

"Woah, Woah, that's a strong sword," he said. There were scratches on the skin when the sword had struck but other than that, he wasn't very hurt. Still, he didn't have time for this.

He swung his arm and the wind alone slammed Alex against the wall, making his entire body hurt.

"The only reason you are alive right now is that you have a lot of talent and mysteries that I want answers to," the old man said. "Aside from that, you will also do well as being my personal alchemist that can heal me when I need to. If not for that, you would be dead for trying to attack me."

"Now, be obedient and stay here for a while. I will return in a few days," the old man said. Alex attacked him once more, but the old man left through the door and restarted the formation behind him.

Alex glared at the door angrily.

"Brother, wh—"

"Don't talk. I need some quiet," Alex said as he quickly sat down and closed his eyes as he started understanding the dao that he had been forcing back for so long.

The old man arrived outside the room and then left outside the underground palace.

He was out in the storm as dozens of lightning bolts struck down around him. For some reason, this gave him a calm that he couldn't explain despite it being the lightning strikes that took away everything from him.

Normal lightning seemed to not affect him at all. Almost as if they didn't even notice his existence in the air.

"Now, where should I start?" he thought. "There's the Blue Spring branch to the north that's the closest, or I can go to the Blazing Earth branch to the west."

The old man was too excited to think of which sect exactly to go for. "Ahh... I should definitely start with... hmm?" His eyes fell back towards the sky, looking through the lightning strikes.

"Is that... a dao?" he was surprised.

His senses suddenly entered the palace underneath and were surprised. "That young man is trying to learn a dao at this time? Why?" the old man thought.

Even as he did, worldly laws started falling from the sky and going into the underground palace. "What the hell?" the old man couldn't help but frown. "How is he so fast?" he thought.

His frown only got deeper when he sensed the dao that the young man he had locked away was learning. It was the same Dao he had learned a long time ago.

Space.

"What terrifying talent to learn about such a complex dao within moments. No, he must've been learning about it for the past 10 years," the old man thought. "So his teleportation dao wasn't a fluke."

Just then, the worldly laws that had descended, receded as the job was done. Alex had learned the Dao of Space.

The old man felt a spatial shockwave as the separation in space between the palace and the outer world was destroyed and the two merged into one.

With learning the space dao, the barrier alone could hardly hold back Alex now that he could freely manipulate space. The old man saw the barrier fall and both the human and the beast come out of the room.

"Heh!" the old man smiled from up in the sky when he sensed Alex's spiritual sense in him.

"Congratulations, young man. You've learned a dao that many can hardly ever learn. No, they can hardly ever even feel the aura of space at all. You must've been incredibly lucky to come across a space treasure."

"Still, I'm afraid you did it all for nothing. Unless you have a treasure to hide from this lightning rain, you cannot even come out of that place, let alone think of stopping me," the old man said.

"I am still very young," Alex said. "I've barely hit my 40s, but even so, I've come to learn something that is fundamental to human nature in a way."

"Oh, and what is that?" the old man said.

"I've learned that people usually let their guards down against others that they deem very much weaker to themselves," Alex said.

The old man's smile lessened a bit before coming back in full. "Are you trying to say that I've underestimated you?" he asked. "Are you saying that you have the strength to beat me?"

"Of course not," Alex said. "I'm only just saying that you let your guard down."

The old man couldn't help but frown. Alex's words made it sound like he had poisoned the old man while he wasn't aware, but that wasn't possible with his oath.

"What are you trying to say?" the old man asked.

"You see, I learned something about this barrier recently. You said that someone teleported out on you before, right? Which was why you added a space-constraining effect to the barrier," Alex said.

"Yes," the old man said. "Is that what you've learned?"

"Yes, that was exactly what I figured out. I learned that the barrier and space are intricately linked. So, whenever the barrier was up, the space was up too."

"Or more accurately, whenever the barrier was down, the space was down as well," Alex said.

The old man still couldn't understand what Alex was trying to say. He had already broken down both the space and the barrier, so these conversations made no sense to him at all.

"Of course," Alex said. "You needn't worry about me leaving when the barrier was down. After all, you were always in the room, and with you being there, how could I possibly leave, right?"

"But you made one mistake in your little preparation here," Alex said.

"Oh? And what is that?" the old man asked. Just then, silence filled everything around him.

The sudden silence made the old man feel unnerved. He turned around to look at the source of the silence.

Just then, he realized something. Sunlight was starting to pour in through the sky as the storm above disappeared.

The lightning rain that had been the defining feature of this land for the last 8 thousand years disappeared.

The formation disappeared.

Alex smiled. "Your one mistake was that you thought I was all alone."

The old man's senses suddenly spread all around him and in one of the nodes that were responsible for the lightning formation, he saw a small mouse making its way away from the place.

"THAT DAMN RAT!" the old man shouted as he reached towards Whisker with his left hand. The space contracted so much that there was barely any distance between him and Whisker.

Alex saw this, but he wasn't worried.

Back when he had just finished making the pill, he had told Whisker to get ready. Since the barrier was down, Whisker could leave if no one focused on him.

Since Whisker was so weak, and since he had the Earth movement technique that allowed him to travel through the ground, he could get away from the location without being caught by the old man as long as he was distracted enough.

The distraction came in the form of the old man's pain, which gave Whisker the perfect opportunity to go.

For the next few minutes, he went around searching for the nodes. Alex had a guess where it could be, but he wasn't sure. So, all he could do was wait for Whisker to find it and disrupt it.

Then, the only thing he needed to do was keep the old man there long enough for Whisker to find the node.

That was the exact reason why Alex spoke so many words. He needed to keep the old man there just long enough.

And now, his wait had given fruit.

The old man grabbed Whisker and pulled him away from where he was. At the same time, Alex teleported back to the outside as he rushed toward the old man.

Midnight made no glow. Instead, it was pitch black as Godslayer empowered it with the death aura he had absorbed from the old man he intended to attack now.

The old man crushed Whisker without hesitation, killing him in his hands. However, Whisker wouldn't die so easily.

His body instead turned into Qi and flew back towards Alex, going into his shoulder plate to regrow again.



At the same time, Alex moved his left arm to constrict the space around the old man. The old man fought back against the space, but he found Alex's intent to be not as easy to fight against.

Even as he tried to break it, Alex arrived in front of him, and with him, he brought a sword full of death.

"Don't hold back on me now, Godslayer!" Alex shouted.

"Do it! I'll give you everything I can," the sword spirit shouted.

Then, Alex swung his sword.

#### Chapter 994: Run Away

Alex put into his attack anything and everything he could as that was the only thing he could do at the moment.

Godslayer gave everything he could as well. So much so that after this one attack, he would have absolutely no energy remaining at all.

Midnight was pitch black as death aura filled it to the fullest. Godslayer's death aura had covered it entirely and since it had come from the old man, the aura was very strong as well.

The Qi lines in Midnight were also being used as Alex poured in Yin to activate it. Then, he struck the old man's chest with the skill of the sword.

God Rending Death Blade.

"AAARH!" the old man cried as the attack struck him. Even if it was coming from Alex, the attack wasn't something the old man could handle when he wasn't putting up any guard.

Since most of his attention was pulled away by the constricting space, Alex had managed to gain an upper-hand.

In the last moment, the old man had managed to break free of the space that constricted him. He had realized that using intent was a losing match against Alex and had instead used brute force to break free.

Even then, he hadn't managed to get out in time to dodge the attack.

The old man cried out in pain, but his body barely bled. With a body that was anything but in the immortal realm, it was quite strong.

So, even when he was in fact hurt, he did not take much damage at all.

Alex slowly backed away when he saw that. He had expected not to do much damage, but to see only the old man's clothes ripped off with just a shallow wound to the skin that barely bled.

With the power he held a moment ago, he had expected the wound to be deeper than it actually was. Fortunately, it was not his intention to cut the man with the attack just now.

The old man looked back angrily and was about to attack when he noticed something slip and fall through his robes.

A long metal chain slipped through his robes, falling from the side of it. The old man caught it before it fell to the ground and looked at it with horror in his eyes.

"You..."

Before he could say anything, the sunny day turned suddenly dark as the sky filled with a storm that crackled with lightning that prepared to drop for his tribulation.

Alex saw that too and knew he needed to run off. He quickly put Pearl back into this beast space and turned around to run away. But before he could go anywhere, he stopped and looked back.

Hidden somewhere in the old man's robes was his ring. And if he let the ring go through lightning tribulation, it would certainly get destroyed.

And with that would destroy many things. Alex wouldn't mind most things that would be destroyed there, but he did care about the World Tree's seeds and the Nine Heaven's Yang Fruit and leaves.

He needed to get it back before he left.

'Dammit!' he thought.

Godslayer was already back in his mind and wasn't conscious at the moment to help him. Whisker was dead for a while, and Pearl was definitely not up to the task to help him.

So, it was all up to him at the moment.

"I thought I would keep you as my alchemist, but you are more pain than anything," he shouted. "I should kill you right now."

Alex got ready to fight back, but before he did, he saw the storm above him and stopped. Whatever it was, he couldn't fight back at all.

The old man reached and directly grabbed onto Alex's neck before bringing him back to him. "I should choke you to death!" the old man shouted.

Alex tried to struggle, but the lightning was moments away from falling down. He needed to do something soon, or he would die to either one of the two.

The old man crushed his neck and Alex could feel his neck's bones getting crushed. Any more and his spine would take damage as well.

Alex grabbed the old man's hands and tried to force him to stop, but he couldn't. Then, he glared at him and suddenly a fist-shaped mental attack struck the old man at close range.

The old man felt his vision go dark for a moment and at that moment, Alex reached into the old man's robes to grab onto his ring that was hidden there.

The old man was out for barely a split second to while Alex grabbed the ring, the old man's consciousness was already back.

He tried to grab onto Alex again, but Alex was prepared this time. Before the old man could touch him, he teleported far away with his ring.

As he teleported out, the old man's hands reached back toward him.

Alex saw it coming and swung his sword in front of him, cutting the space right ahead of him.

The hand struck the broke space and was stopped. The old man forcefully broke through the space to reach for Alex, but before he could do so, the lightning fell from the sky and struck him.

Alex heard the sound and felt the shockwave of the lightning bolt that could easily kill him if he wasn't careful at all.

He backed away as far as he could from the old man.

The lightning bolt was too strong, and in his mind, the old man was surely dead. However, he couldn't stand around just in case.

He turned around to run away. However, before he could make it very far, he found himself unable to move. Space was constricting his movement, just like he had done with the old man.

However, there was something weirder with how he was being constricted. If it had been normal constriction, Alex might have gotten away after fighting back with his intent.

However, his space was constantly being destroyed and reformed. And as it did that, it started affecting the other spaces around him too.

Cuts appeared all over his body, the broken space cutting him apart. Alex put on his blood armor, but even that was useless.

The old man was using some sort of attack that didn't come from any dao he knew, so Alex found it hard to stop.

The lacerating space was unstoppable already, and to top it all off, the old man arrived in front of Ning.

"He was missing half his left hand with the remaining parts being completely charred. His right left eye had popped and as such, it was constantly oozing with blood and tears.

"You... are not... going anywhere," he spoke, barely. His voice was hoarse and almost indecipherable.

The lacerating space around him stopped after the old man's arrival as he reached out. "Make... me a pill," he said.

Alex didn't. His body was healing already and he used the moment to try and run away. However, the old man used his power to stop the space around him.

He was even forcing his spiritual strength on top of Alex to stop him from being able to use anything.

"Make me the pill!" he shouted.

Alex swung his blade around, trying to cut up the space, but it was hard to do so. His intent wasn't that much stronger than the old man's, and he didn't have the brute force like the old man to simply break through this space.

"Just die already," Alex spoke. His voice was hoarse too as his neck was nearly destroyed just moments ago.

"I need a pill!" the old man shouted, using every bit of Qi in what he did next.

Suddenly, every single space around Alex opened up. Not only was the old man's own space free now, but Alex also found that his storage ring and storage bags were all open all of a sudden.

Vast amounts of treasures, ingredients, and various other materials came flying out all of a sudden.

His many swords, books, alchemy ingredients, formation plates, spirit stones, and everything else were scattered in front of him.

The World Tree's Seed, the Yang tree's seed, and the strong sword were out. Not only that, even his Blood God's Manual was out for some reason. Not to mention, Memory was out as well.

Alex wanted to care about everything that was in front of him, but he found it hard to care about it as his own life was in danger.

If giving them up meant he could survive, he would give up on them. There would be infinite chances in finding treasures, but there was only a single chance at life.

If he died, it was all over. So, Alex decided to run away and let the old man die.

However, just then, he saw something else that flew out from the space it belonged to.

Pearl.

Pearl's beast space was violently opened up as well as he was forcefully brought out. Pearl cried out in pain as he was way too weak to handle the old man's aura.

Alex looked with wide eyes as his thought of leaving all vanished within a moment. He couldn't leave Pearl here or he would most certainly die.

His mind wasn't fast enough to come up with a plan, but his eyes were. It moved all around the space looking at various things until it saw something near him.

There it was, the simple yellow paper that could save him from this predicament. The paper he had found over 25 years ago and had no use for until now.

The Teleportation Talisman.

#### Chapter 995: Get Away

The old man was dead for sure. If not for the 8th lightning bolt, the 9th one would kill him for sure.

Alex was only just worried about his own survivability. So, when he saw the yellow paper float not far from him, he knew what he had to do.

His right hand held Midnight, so he reached out with his left hand and grabbed the teleportation talisman.

This was a talisman that hadn't been used in over 30 years easily, so the energy it had gathered in the meantime was enough for Alex to teleport with.

He poured Qi into it the moment he grabbed it, and as soon as that happened, he felt the aura of teleportation slowly circle around him.

The old man was too far gone in his own madness and was ravaging through Alex's various pills that were floating in front of him. He was eating any pill he came across and that gave Alex the perfect opportunity to escape.

As the teleportation aura covered him, Alex felt a sense of understanding as to what was happening. He could feel the aura trying to latch onto some sort of space in a random direction.

Alex realized that he could change this direction if he wanted to, but at the moment, he didn't even know what direction he was turning toward with the sun in the sky. So, he could only let fate decide where he was going.

Now, all he had to do was bring Pearl back into his space.

Alex also understood how this teleportation worked. His normal teleportation was on where he switched the space in his body with another open space.

In the teleportation with the talisman, it teleported the space around him, rather than just him. This was very inefficient in a sense and required too much power.

However, it had its advantage too, and Alex realized that advantage.

"If the space is big enough... I can take everything with me," he thought.

Suddenly, Alex pushed away the teleportation aura around him encompassing everything around him as much as he could. The more items he was bringing along, the smaller the teleportation distance would be, but he didn't care about that.

Not everything he had lost was inside the radius of his teleportation aura, but he didn't have the luxury to worry about it. Still, it was only some ingredients or pills or spirit stones that he was missing out on.

Now, all he had to do was teleport away.

The old man noticed him leaving. "You bastard! Come heal me!" he shouted, but his shout drowned as the next bolt of lightning fell.



"Just die quietly," Alex said, and then he disappeared as he was teleported away with various different items of his.

The moment Alex reappeared somewhere else, he felt incredible pain as his body started getting ripped apart immediately.

Winds howled around him as the wind itself seemed to slice him up every single way. When he opened his eyes to see what was happening, he saw various different colors move around to destroy everything in their path.

Alex's body healed to protect itself, but it wasn't enough. He needed to get out of this place. He was in grave danger.

Just then, he saw his storage ring float in front of him and even further than that was Pearl, whose own body was getting torn up by the wind.

"Pearl!" he shouted, and at the same time, he lost vision. The sharp winds had destroyed his eyes, and even while he tried to heal them, they would be destroyed again.

Alex sent out his spiritual sense and grabbed onto the ring. But for some reason, even his spiritual sense seemed unusable in this wind as it was very quickly destroyed.

Still, he sent it out as far as he could for Pearl. "Pearl, come back!" he shouted, but the sound itself seemed to be torn up in this location.

Alex saw glimpses of the various other things around him. Without vision, and with what little spiritual sense he could use to latch onto the object, he tried to bring them back as well.

"Come back!" he shouted as he tried to pull them away. "Pearl, come!" he shouted as he tried to pull Pearl as well.

However, he couldn't tell what was happening outside of him anymore. His senses had already stopped functioning, and now even his vocal cords were ripped apart by the wind.

His limbs were already in tatters, so if he spent any longer, he would surely die. So, with what little consciousness he had remaining, he called back everything he had once more.

Whether it happened or not, he used all of his mental prowess that still remained to use the Dao of Teleportation to get far away from this place.

The talisman from before had been destroyed by the wind, but Alex remembered the location it was trying to take him to. So, he thought of that direction and used the full force of his teleportation powers.

With his last thought before he was teleported away, he simply sent a mental message to Pearl.

Get away.

Alex teleported once again, but this time he had no idea where he had gone. He couldn't even worry about it as he fainted when he arrived at the new place.

Sometime later, Alex woke up to the constant poking on his head. He suddenly got up and the bird flew far away.

He remembered everything immediately and checked for everything. He was holding Midnight in his right hand, and his Storage ring in his left hand.

He didn't know how long he had been out, but he had healed completely.

He checked the storage ring and found that it was empty. He quickly checked his left biceps and found the claw print still there. However, it was empty.

Pearl was alive, but he was not with him.

"No...," Alex couldn't help but feel sad and destroyed. This was not the first time he had been away from Pearl, but this was the first time he had been in a such dire situation. Pearl was likely somewhere bleeding and in need of desperate treatment.

"No, I can't sit here and mop. I need to find Pearl," he thought and stand up. However, before finding Pearl, he needed to know where he was going, and where he was at.

He looked around the giant crater he seemed to have formed and wondered, "Where am I?"

[End of Volume 3: Forged in Ice and Fire]

\* \* \* \* \*

[Extras]

Two figures appeared on top of the Intercontinental Teleportation formation. One was a girl and another a beast.

The moment they arrived, they looked towards the east.

"Oh, someone is trying to break through?" the beast said with a curious expression on his face before it disappeared. "No, he's dead."

"Is that so?" the girl said. She could sense the disturbance in the atmosphere to the east too, but she couldn't tell exactly what was happening. Her senses were nowhere near the level of the beast.

"Anyway, thank you senior, for bringing me here," she said.

"No problem. Just go on and do what you came here to do. I will go visit someone and might come to help you before returning to my own place," he said.

"I will," the girl said.

The beast went away and the girl was left alone. She sighed and looked around. "Now, where the hell am I supposed to find enough materials to fix 4 different Intercontinental Teleportation formations?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Tai Guan sensed the start of the lightning tribulation and the end of it as well. The moment it ended, she and various other ancestors made their way toward the now lightning-less lightning peninsula and found the remains of the mad immortal.

"He's dead," someone said with apparent disbelief in their eyes.

"He's really dead!" another person said.

"This is a cause for celebration."

Everyone started enjoying the good news the moment they learned about the madman's death. Only a few select ones weren't enjoying themselves as they searched for someone else in the area.

"Did you find any?" Huang Xinyi asked the two ladies. Both of them shook their faces.

"That's a good sign," Elder Xuan said, her crystal blue robe fluttering in the stormless wind. "That means he got away."

"He's certainly not dead, that's for sure," Tai Guan said. "But where could he have gone?"

The group tried to find any sign of Alex's death, but there simply was none.

Tai Guan returned back to the sect and found Liz.

"The old mad Immortal died in a lightning tribulation," she told her.

"And my nephew?" Liz asked with clear pessimism in her eyes. She was ready for the bad news.

"We do not know anything about him other than the fact that he did not die there," she said.

Liz's eyes filled with hope when she heard that. "So, he escaped?" she asked.

"Most likely, but that doesn't mean his life is any better now," Tai Guan said.

"Doesn't matter," Liz said. "As long as he managed to get away, he is bound to do something great. I trust in him to do that much."

She showed great determinism and optimism now that she knew her nephew had gotten away from captivity.

"Let's go, master. I wish to train even more," she said. "I want to be strong enough to kill Immortals."

\* \* \* \* \*

The script to the Demon realm in the Ruler's Domain opened and the Black Tortoise noticed.

However, even if he noticed he wouldn't care. As long as they didn't bother him, he was fine. After all, he was wounded and couldn't afford any energy he didn't have toward the intruder.

Still, he sent out his spiritual sense to see who had entered. When he did, he noticed the beast that had come in.

Immediately, the tortoise got up, the snow dropping all around him like an avalanche, and looked towards the beast that had already made its way next to him.

"How..." the tortoise couldn't help but be shocked at the new figure. "How are you... !"

The new beast that had come smiled at him as it spoke, "Wow, you're in worse shape than I thought you would be. Do you need my help?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Pearl was barely conscious to even think straight, let alone remember what had happened before.

The only thing he remembered was that when he was in the most desperate of situations, there was a golden glow coming from his body and he had somehow managed to get away from that place.

Still, He had lost a limb and had wounds all over his body. He had lost his left eye, and his right eye saw nothing but red.

He didn't know where he was and if it was day or night. He didn't even care how good he was. As he wasn't thinking straight, there was a single thought in his mind.

Find Alex.

So, he ran around, trying to find him. And then, he found him. It was faint, very faint, but he found the connection between him and Alex, and he followed that.

He was already low on Qi, so after he flew for hours, he couldn't keep up any longer. So, when he ran out of Qi, he crashed into a forest, fully wounded and unable to even move.

He growled with what little energy he had and even his body had reverted to being small to preserve as much energy as possible.

He stared into the night as he breathed in and out, and slowly he was starting to lose consciousness.

Just then, he heard some footsteps and used the last of his self to keep his eyes open.

The last thing he saw before going unconscious was a middle-aged man, standing in front of him with wide eyes and a shocked face.

The last thing he heard before going unconscious was the middle-aged man saying a single word.

"Pearl?"

Chapter 996: The Bird

Alex stood up and looked around at the fiery crater that burned with flames that were of red, yellow, pink, and purple colors.

"Weird," he thought as he looked around at the crater. "Did I make this crater?"

The crater was nearly 50 meters wide in all directions with no sign of any trees anywhere. "How did I possibly make this crater? Did I fall here with a great force?" he thought.

He didn't think himself strong enough to make such a massive crater, but then he remembered that Pearl's mother had also fallen into the forest and created a crater, so he stopped thinking much about it and started thinking of leaving.

He started walking out while checking himself. He was completely naked at the moment. Everything he wore had either ripped off in that strong wind or completely burned away after he had come here.

His Qi had dropped to almost nothing, but fortunately, his body had healed. He didn't have Pearl with him anymore, but he was kept away from despairing by knowing that he was alive for now.

He would have to find him quickly, however as he could be in danger. He put on the empty ring in his hand and placed Midnight in it.

"I even lost Memory already. Not to mention my master's... sigh." He couldn't help but feel dejected when thinking about the fact that he had lost everything.

The swords, the seeds, the books, the cauldrons, and everything else. The only thing he had on him now was the ring, Midnight, and Whisker who was still healing.

"Wait, did I lose the book too?" he thought and quickly pulled out the Blood God's Manual. Fortunately, that book was still there.

"Of course," Alex thought and shook his head. He tried calling for Godslayer, but Godslayer was unconscious after giving everything he had in that one attack.

"So, I managed to keep just 4 things with me," Alex thought as a great amount of frustration built up in him. "Goddammit! Why do I have to keep running away in every fight."

He was angry that not just once, but twice he had come across people that forced him to run away to a place he didn't know about.

"Shit!" he grunted before stopping. "I can't keep doing this. I can't keep running away. The only reason I am forced to run away is that I'm weak, aren't I? Screw it then, I will cultivate to whatever height I can reach as quickly as possible."

Just then, something fell on him. "Hmm?" Alex looked down and saw a fist-sized rock that had just dropped on his head.

"What the hell?" he thought as he looked above him to see a parrot-like bird with red and yellow feathers that ended in blue. The bird was about the size of a parrot as well and currently very happy because it managed to hit Alex.



"What the hell? It's that bird," he remembered. That was the bird that was poking him before he woke up.

"Don't drop stones on me, or I will kill you," Alex shouted as his anger was still burning inside of him.

The bird only laughed when it heard that. It quickly flew away, and Alex looked at it to see where it was going. When he saw it pick up another stone, Alex started scolding again.

"I'm telling you, you better not drop that— hey!" he shouted as the bird flew to the sky and tossed the stones towards him.

Alex caught the stone before it hit him and tossed it back at the bird. The bird dodged it, but it was angry now.

The bird flapped its wings furiously and flew down towards Alex. "What? You want to come at me?" he asked. "Come then!"

The bird flew at him with incredible speed and Alex got ready for it. He wanted to catch the bird and punish it a little for trying to toy with him.

Just the bird got close, he tried to grab it. But suddenly, the bird turned into white light and disappeared.

Alex stumbled backward in shock. "Wha-what?"

He quickly stood his ground and looked around. He even sent out his spiritual sense to try and search for the bird, but it was nowhere.

"Did it teleport?" he thought. But he hadn't felt any teleportation aura. Instead, it looked more similar to something else.

He quickly looked at his body. His arms, his legs, and even his back. There was a cat's paw mark on his left arm and a mouse's paw print on his shoulder plate.

And now, there was a bird's feather on the side of his right thigh.

"What the hell?" he thought as he realized that he had unconsciously bonded with another beast.  
"Another one?"

"Hey, come out!" he shouted at the bird, but nothing happened. "What? Come out." Alex even poured in what little Qi he had but the bird wouldn't come out at all.

"Why aren't you coming out? Did I bond with you or not? Come out I said or I am going to cancel our bond right now," he threatened the bird.

The bird screeched as it flew out and landed on the sand in front of Alex.

"So, you are finally out. It's not like you don't understand my words then," Alex said. "Did you bond with me while I was bloody and battered?"

The bird turned its head around before nodding.

"Why?" Alex asked.

The bird pointed towards the edge of the crater. "What's there?" he asked. "Or is he pointing at the distance?"

The bird suddenly screeched.

"What now?" he asked.

The bird screeched even more angrily and Alex thought he understood the bird this time around.

"Oh... you're a female bird, huh?" Ning thought. "Anyway, what type of bird are you?"

The parrot-like bird tried to say something, but Alex couldn't understand this thing. He shook his head to show that he couldn't understand what the bird was trying to say.

The bird looked around, her intelligent eyes searching for something. When she did, she flew away.

Alex watched as the bird flew over to some of the debris that was still in flames and jumped onto it.

"Wait, no. You'll get hu— huh?" he felt confused as the bird softly snuggled into the flames. "How are you not hurt?"

Alex slowly walked towards the bird and tried to place his hands in the fire to see if it was actually not that hot.

The moment his hands touched the flames, it instantly started burning and Alex felt pain shoot up through his arm.

"Aaaah!" he cried out loud and the bird tried to help him, but before she could, Alex used his True Fire dao to suppress the flames and make them disappear.

His right arm was still left charred, but it slowly healed using the remainder of his Qi, which wasn't a lot.

The bird looked at him with curious eyes. Alex looked back at the bird that wasn't hurt by the flames that burned him.

"Do you have a high cultivation base?" he wondered and checked the bird, but to his surprise, the bird had absolutely no cultivation base.

"Then how are you—" his words paused mid-sentence as he saw the color of the flames and the color of the bird, and words floated into his head about a bird that created flames.

His eyes went wide as he looked around him. The crater had no trees or anything, just sand.

"No way," he thought as he quickly ran through the crater and climbed up it to arrive at the highest point.

Then, he saw it.

Sand.

That was all he could see for the most part. He was in the desert and the sand was everywhere.

Then he felt the Qi around him. There was none.

"No way," he said to himself as he found it unbelievable. "Did I really just come to the Southern Continent?"

He turned around and looked at the bird that was coming out of the flames. "And did I seriously bond with a descendant of the Vermilion Bird right after coming here?" he thought.

The bird flew next to him, but Alex found it hard to concentrate on him. The sun was steadily setting, so he knew which direction was what.

So, he looked north, but there was just desert there too. Then, he flew up higher and higher until he was at a height where he could reach the clouds.

Then he finally saw what he was looking for. The ocean. Or more accurately, the land beyond the ocean.

The Central Continent.

"If I came from the Lightning Peninsula, and I was on my way here, which was cut short due to how many items I was taking, I must have ended up on the Central continent before this."

"I see," he thought. "No wonder there was such a strong wind. That wasn't wind at all, was it? But the violent Qi that circles the Central Continent. Shen Jing did tell me it was strong, but to think it would destroy a Saint realm body cultivator's body so easily."

"Or maybe it was because we had Saint realm body cultivation that we survived in the first place. A normal saint realm cultivator would've been torn to shred for sure," he thought.

"If I hadn't been greedy and tried to bring it all back, maybe Pearl would've— No, I can't think about the past right now. I need to think about my present," he thought.

"If I'm in the Southern Continent, then... " His eyes went wide. "I can find my father here."

#### Chapter 997: Scarlet

Alex kept staring at the hazy image of the Central continent in the distance and wondered if he should try and go there.

It seemed close enough that he could reach it if he just flew for 2 or 3 hours.

But he hadn't lost enough of his rational mind to understand that whatever he was thinking was simply undoable. Ignoring the practicality of flying through the entire ocean, not getting caught off by the beasts that roamed in it, there was simply no way for him to get into the continent.

The Qi barrier that tore up everything was simply impossible to get by. He could maybe teleport in, but then how thick was the Qi wall? Given that it was a continent, it had to be massive right?

He subconsciously remembered the howling wind that put him to sleep every night as a kid and shuddered. He had never thought that it would be that destructive Qi that was doing it all.

"I can't go in just yet. Not only do I not have the strength or ability to bypass that wall, but I also don't even have the Qi to fly close to it. I will have to think of another way to get in there and get close to Pearl," he thought as he flew back down to the edge of the crater.

There was absolutely no Qi in the environment for him to gather from, and no spirit stones in his storage ring for him to use either.

"Isn't only some part of the Southern Continent supposed to be without Qi? There's an entire section of the continent where you can freely use Qi right?" he thought. If that was the case, then that was where he was going to go.

"Since that way is north, I will most likely have to go south to get to that place," he said to himself. "But first..."

He turned towards the tiny Vermilion bird. "So, little phoenix, how did you end up in this place? Did you run away from your family?" he asked.

The bird screeched, but there was no answer he could formulate from it. "I don't know much about Vermilion birds, so you might actually be a variant of it, and not actually a Vermilion bird, but still, seeing your intelligence, I can say without a doubt that you have a tremendous amount of bloodline," he said.

"You are most likely just like Pearl. He wasn't as intelligent as you when he was just a child, but then he was also an infant back then," he said. "Speaking of which, how old are you exactly?"

The bird gave a tilted glance as she thought for a while and replied something. She didn't know.

"Sigh, and what about your parents? Where are they? Certainly, they didn't just lay an egg and leave right?" he asked.

The bird screeched angrily as she didn't know the answer to any of the questions he was asking.

"Okay, okay, I get it. But one last question," he said. "Do you have a name?"

The bird shook her head.

"Seriously? You can't go around without a name. You need one," Alex said. "Let me think of a good one."

Alex rubbed his chin in a thinking gesture, and the bird followed him as she too used her wing feathers to rub her chin in a similar way too.

"What? Do you want to be called Mirror?" he asked. The bird screeched angrily.

"Haha, that was a joke. Wait, let me actually come up with serious answers," Alex said as he gave the names some more thought.

"Red Feathers? Tiny Phoenix? How about Crimson Death? Wait no, I have a really good one. How about Lord Fi—"

The bird screeched in anger as none of the names were good in her thought.

"Not even Lord Fire? I thought that was a good one," Alex said. He gave some more thought and said, "Okay, how about just Scarlet?"

The bird was about to get angry, but she stopped when she gave it some thought.

"Scarlet, it's good, right? It's a feminine name, but at the same time, it sounds dangerous. Like something you should stay away from in all cases. Scarlet. What do you think?" he asked.

The bird nodded, finally accepting the name that Alex had come up with.

"Good, then from today on, I shall call you Scarlet," he said.

Scarlet screeched in happiness at finding her new name.

"Come," Alex said as he beckoned her to climb on his hand. Scarlet was apprehensive for a moment before climbing onto it.

Alex then brought his hand next to his shoulder and had her step on it. Once Scarlet was firmly perched on his shoulder, he finally decided to get away from this burning crater.

"To the south it is," he said as he finally walked out of the crater. He sent out his spiritual sense everywhere around him, but it seemed pointless as there was nothing but sand dunes all around him.

He shook his head and took back his senses to keep it just around him.

As he walked away, he didn't notice it at all, but the fire that had been burning in the crater slowly got smaller and smaller as he got away.

After some distance, the fire in the crater was completely extinguished, never to burn there again.

Alex continued forward as he felt the atmosphere. He didn't really have to feel it as his eyes were capable of seeing Qi now.

He remembered seeing the multicolor spectrum that was the Qi wall that blocked the Central continent.

In contrast to that, there was no color in the atmosphere in this place. "It's truly devoid of all Qi," he thought. He couldn't help but wonder why that was.

The situation was clearly not like the Forbidden Fields where his body was heavily suppressed, making it impossible to use Qi or spiritual sense.

He could freely use his Qi and spiritual sense. If used up, his spiritual sense would recover quite quickly as well. However, due to the lack of Qi, he couldn't do the same for his cultivation as well.



"Still, why isn't there any Qi here?" he wondered. He thought about the Central continent's lack of Qi being a cause for a moment, but that thought seemed wrong.

He could understand if Qi was constantly being dragged towards the vortex of Qi in the Central Continent, but that was not the case. Or else he would have seen faint lines of color in the atmosphere.

Aside from that, he wondered if it was some formation that was making Qi unable to enter this region. He didn't think it was someone's doing, but rather a natural formation that formed from the ever-changing desert.

There was one other possibility here that he simply couldn't ignore. And that was the possibility that it was the doing of someone with a higher power, most likely an immortal.

"Your ancestor might be why I have to walk in these shifting sands instead of fly directly across it," he said to Scarlet, who showed no reaction.

That was only funnier for him. He shook his head. "Let's just continue walking for now. I need to quickly find a set of clothes for myself."

#### Chapter 998: Solid Earth

Alex walked through the shifting sands, barely able to step up and down dunes without cascading along the sand itself.

It had been hours since he had started walking, but he was making very little progress because of how hard it was to walk.

He thought of flying, but with what little Qi he had, he needed to save it for if he was ever injured. In a place with no Qi, he needed to save as much as he could.

Night had fallen by now and the silver moon hung high in the sky. Yet, he saw no path that would lead anywhere, no color than the silver sands that could tell him which direction was the best to go in.

So, he simply kept walking south.

The night had grown cold, far colder than he would've ever imagined a place such as this to ever grow. As far as he remembered, the Forbidden Fields never got remotely as close.

But then, they were also affected by the Yang tree, so that might have been the reason for the warmth there.

A few hours before dawn, around 2 or 3 am in the night, Alex finally arrived on land where his feet did not simply sink.

He arrived at a land where the grounds were deserted and crusty as if they hadn't seen water in centuries, but they weren't sandy. As such, now he could walk more easily. He could even run if he wanted to.

Alex increased his pace and went further along. Then, another few hours later, right before dawn approached, he heard something and stopped.

A rattling sound came from not far away. Alex immediately spread his spiritual sense and noticed a rattling snake, one whose body had the same thickness as Alex's torso.

It was about 300 meters away from him and had absolutely no cultivation base at all. So, Alex didn't really find it necessary to worry about it.

The snake seemed to have noticed him as well and slid in his direction.

Alex was trying to ignore it, but he found it hard to as the snake came in his direction. He sighed at the trouble, but before he could think anything else, the snake's speed increased tremendously as it lunged toward him.

Scarlet flew away at once and Alex ducked at the last second and got back up to look at the snake with wide eyes. "So fast," he thought. "How is it so fast with no culti--"

His words stopped in his mouth as he remembered the beasts back in the Forbidden Fields that had the incredible physical capability.

"Wait, is this one like that too?" he thought.

The snake turned around and came for him again, but by now, Alex had Midnight in his hand.

The sword got twice as large and Alex swung it right in between the snake's mouth horizontally.

The sword cut halfway into the snake's mouth and tore along the side of its body. Blood and gut poured out of it, dousing Alex in it all.

Alex's entire body was fully covered in it, making Scarlet who was flying far away not want to come near him. In the end, she disappeared into her beast space, not wanting to stay anywhere around Alex at the moment.

Alex put away Midnight and wiped his face with his hands. Fortunately, the snake's blood didn't spell as bad, or he would be vomiting non-stop.

He used the tiniest bit of Qi and used blood manipulation to throw away all the blood from him. Then he looked at the dead snake nearly 10 meters wide and flayed open on one side.

"How strong was this beast again?" he wondered. It was hard to quantify physical strength in terms of cultivation base when there was none to compare it with.

All Alex could say was that the beast was in the True realms at most and forget about it.

"Well, at least I found something to cover myself with," he thought. He brought out Midnight again and started cutting open the beasts.

He wasn't the best at it, but he wasn't that bad at the task either. In the 10 years, he had been forced to remain under house arrest by the madman, he had spent his time doing various different things.

One of those things was butchering beasts he had killed back in the Demonic forest. It was partially to use their body parts as ingredients for pills, but it was also partially to turn them into materials for sword handles and such.

In particular, he had found himself to be pretty good at separating just the skin of the beast to use the leader for various purposes.

One such purpose was now to make himself a pants and a simple shirt.

Even as the sun rose on the horizon, Alex sat by the dead snake and butchered it until he had its skin, bones, and tendons separated. Everything else he just threw into his storage ring.

He turned a patch of skin into the shape of a shirt and wore it. He had used a few splinters of bones and tendons to tie it all up to hold it all together.

He did the same with his pants too which just happened to be barely enough to cover his shin. Bones and tendons held it together as well.

It felt awkward to wear the skin of a just dead beast, but what other choice did he have? It was also uncomfortable to wear since the leather didn't just lay on his skin like a normal robe would and instead fought with him to stay on top.

Still, it didn't come off even when Alex jumped around, so he knew it was good enough for now. "I should get proper cloth once I find civilization again," he thought.

Once done, he left the area and started walking north again.

There were mountains in this region too, but they were all barren and easy to climb up and down as opposed to sand dunes, so Alex was very fast in his walking.

About halfway through the day, Scarlet knocked on his head and pointed to the side. By now, she was out again and standing on top of Alex's shoulders again.

Alex looked towards the side she pointed at and saw something in the distance. At first, he thought it was just some cactus or desert bushes that he had come to see.

However, when he really looked, he realized that the thing in the distance was moving, and it was massive.

He slowly pulled out at midnight, getting ready to fight. However, when he saw what it really was, he stopped.

"Wait, those are carriages," he said when he noticed them. Finally, he had found some semblance of civilization.

He quickly put away his sword and started running in their direction. Scarlet disappeared into her beast's space when she realized he was going in the humans' direction.

Alex arrived close to the carriage and a few people immediately got out in front of the carriage. They were all broad-shouldered men that looked very strong and wearing nothing but a pair of pants.

They wore necklaces, bracelets and armlets made up of beast bones and had skin that was very brown. They were so incredibly tanned that Alex thought for a moment that they were just clad in black blood.

"Move out of the way or we will kill you!" they shouted as they held large bone spears in their hands.

Alex raised his hands to show that he was harmless. "I don't mean any harm. I am lost and was hoping to ride your carriage and maybe borrow a few clothes."

The men suddenly dropped their aggressiveness, and Alex was happy to see that they weren't muscle brained. However, then he heard the main person speak.

"Heh, look at his skin, so fair. Relax brothers, it's just a weak little kid," one of the men at the front said.

"Yeah, he reminds me of myself when I first came to this place," another one said.

"Kid, get out of the way. Go back to your tribe and don't run in front of our carriage again. Next time, we will kill you," they said and turned around to return.

"Brothers, wait. I'm not someone from any tribe. I'm just a wanderer who has lost his ways. Can you please let me come with you?" Alex said.

"A herd leaves behind the weak, and you expect us to add one to ours?" the man asked.

"Can I at least follow you?" Alex asked.

"Don't try, kid. We don't need another useless mouth to feed," the man said.

"I can be of use. I can do anything," Alex said.

The man however just waved Alex away. "Yeah, go be of use to some other tribe. Our Stepstones tribe has no need for you," he said.

Alex's patience was coming to an end at this point. He had been respectful for a while, but now he was heavily siding on using his fists at the moment.

The carriage had arrived close to them at this point and the one at the front suddenly stopped.

Alex and the others stopped what they were talking about and looked towards the carriage.

The door to the carriage opened and a woman with well-defined muscles walked out with heavily tanned skin just like the others.

She stepped up to the 3 buffed men while casting a curious glance toward Alex.

"Who is this young brother? And What's does he want?" she asked.

Chapter 999: Pretty

"Nothing much, sister Yun. I was just trying to send this kid away. He keeps insisting on coming with us," she said.

The girl turned towards Alex with an inquisitive look. "Why do you want to come with us? Do you have something to do with the Stepstones tribe?"

"I'm afraid I have nothing of business with your tribe, miss," he said. "I simply wished to accompany you to go to the nearest city. I can drop off halfway through if you are worried about me having bad intentions."

The 3 men immediately laughed when they heard that. They did not believe Alex to be strong enough to do anything at all.

"You are so weak that you wouldn't even be able to--"

The girl glared at them and the man stopped speaking.

"When you say you want to go to a nearby city, which city are you talking about?" she asked.

"I... am afraid I do not know about any cities around here," Alex said.

"Wait, kid. Are you actually a player? I thought it was just a coincidence that you had untanned skin," one of the guards said.

Alex looked at him. "I am," he said. "Are you a player too?"

"Yes, I am," he said. "Damn, did they start sending out more of you? Do yourself a favor kid, stop playing the game and leave. This isn't a game, but a real world."

"Oh, I'm not a new player," Alex said.

"Huh? How young were you when you started playing then?" the man asked.

"Stop asking random questions," the girl said. "You, come with me."

The girl turned around and got back into the carriage. "Well, I guess we have no other choice then. Go on, kid," the man said.

Alex nodded and thanked them before going onto the carriage.

The inside of the carriage wasn't very good. All it was was some metal frame that was stuck together with some leather seats inside. There were no fancy colors or drapes.

The carriage was really just there to stop the sun. The girl sat on one side of the carriage seats, so Alex sat on the one opposite to her.

"You can seat next to me," she said as she patted the empty seat next to her.

"No, I'm fine," Alex said. He looked outside the carriage, but there was no sight to see other than barren land and dried-up bushes. After all, it really was all desert in this part of the southern continent.

"What is your name?" the girl asked.

"Yu Ming," Alex said. "What's yours?"



"Li Yun," the girl replied without much emotion in her voice. She looked at him from head to toe. "Those are some rather crude clothes you are wearing. Someone must've done a bad job at drying the leather before making your clothes," she said.

"Hehe," Alex simply laughed and said nothing else. He looked at the girl's own clothes.

She had a lot of skin showing from her face to her arms to her stomach and legs. The only parts that were really covered were her chest and thighs.

She wasn't even wearing any shoes or sandals. Alex remembered back to the men outside who were only wearing some pants and nothing else.

"Are you done looking?" the girl asked.

"Ah, my apologies. I was just looking at the tailor's work on your clothes," Alex said. "I will look away."

"It's fine," the girl said. "You can look at me if you want."

Alex couldn't help but be a little surprised. Any other girl would've surely been offended at this point and this girl was instead asking to be stared at.

"It's alright," Alex said and only looked into her eyes.

"I like your eyes," the girl said.

"Thank you," Alex said with slight confusion bubbling in his heart. He couldn't understand what was going on here.

Was she falling in love with him? Was she even old enough to? Alex looked no older than 20 or 22 just because he was a cultivator. However, in the girl's case, she wasn't one.

He had heard about Southern Continent's people being Body Cultivators, but could body cultivation improve lifespan or aging?

Alex was quite oblivious to this side of things.

"You seem to be someone important. Are you the tribe's strongest disciple or something?" Alex asked.

"I'm the chief's daughter," she said. "In terms of strength, I rank pretty high in the tribe."

"I see," he said. 'Tribes and chiefs huh? It seems I will have to get used to a new system of cultivators.'

"Where are you from?" the girl asked with her head resting on her hands, which rested on her knee.

"I'm from... somewhere far away," Alex said, unsure if he wanted to say the exact place.

"And where is somewhere far away?" the girl asked.

Alex smiled as it seemed the girl was too curious. Since she had decided to give him a ride, he decided to answer her as well. "In another continent," he replied.

The girl looked at him with foolish surprise on her face for a few seconds before bursting out into a peal of laughter.

"You are funny. Has anyone ever told you that?" she asked.

"No, not really," Alex said.

"So, where did you really come from?" she asked.

"I wasn't lying. I'm from another continent. I came here on accident, and I'm trying to find my way back," he said.

"Do you have to go back?" she asked.

"Of course," Alex said.

"But I don't want you to," she said with a sad look on her face.

"Sorry?" Alex looked at her awkwardly.

"I don't want you to go anywhere," she said.

"I don't understand what you are trying to say, miss Yun," Alex said. "I don't know why you would say you don't want me to leave."

"Because you are so pretty and fair, like a piece of jewelry made from ivory. I want to keep around a young and pretty man like you since you are so good in the eyes," she said.

"I beg your pardon!" Alex was a little offended at what she had said.

"Oh, don't worry, you will learn to stop begging very soon. All slaves are taught that very early on. Begging won't help them at all," she said.

"Slave?" Alex's eyes narrowed.

"Of course," the girl said. Her face then turned disgusted. "Although, with your meager strength, the best you could be useful for would be bait for the beasts at night, but I guess you are too pretty to die in vain. So, I will make you my slave instead."

Alex remained quiet for a few moments as he had to take it all in. In the end, all he could do was sigh. "So, there are slaves in the Southern Continent?" he asked.

"Just in the Wastelands, but yes," the girl said.

He shook his head as he hoped that his father wasn't one. "What do you make the slaves do?" he asked.

"They beat their masters, of course," she said with a smile on her face.

Alex thought his mind stopped working for a moment as what he heard was simply outrageous.

"Wait, you mean their masters beat them... no, that doesn't make sense. Why would that be an answer? Then... what?" he couldn't comprehend the meaning behind that simple sentence.

"Well, they cook for us, wash for us, and do whatever we say them to. But mostly, we just use slaves to beat us," she said.

"Okay, I have no idea what sort of masochistic society you guys live in, but I'm not going to be part of it. I'm not going to be your slave either, so you can fuck right off," Alex said.

"Heh, you can say that all you want, but once we reach our tribe, you will either be a bait or my slave. I will leave the choice up to you," she said.

"And my choice will forever be neither. Girl, how old are you even?" he asked.

"Don't call me girl, call me master. I'm 34 years old," she said.

"And I'm 42. I'm older than you, so you will not talk to me like I'm younger than you," he said.

"Whatever! I don't know how it was in your continent, but in the Wastelands, strength beats all. If you want respect, then you need to be strong," the girl said with a puffed-up chest. "If not, you will be lucky just to be a slave. So, be happy that you are one."

\*SLAP\*

Alex made a resounding slap that reddened the girl's cheek. The girl didn't even see when he moved; all she could feel was a slight pain and burning heat on her cheeks.

"How's that for strength? Do you still think I should be disrespected? Do you still think I should be a slave?" he asked.

"What... how did you?" she asked.

"What now? Since you are so weak, maybe I should make you my slave. How does that sound?" he asked.

The girl held her cheek as tears rolled down her eyes. Even so, Alex didn't stop glaring at her.

Mere tears weren't enough to soften the anger he felt at the moment after being repeatedly said to be turned into a slave.

"Tell me, what should I do to weaklings like you?" he asked.

The girl slowly put her hands down. "Fine, make me your slave," she said.

'The hell? This girl isn't serious, right?' he thought.

"But in return, you must marry me when I get stronger," she said.

'Oh no,' he thought. 'I got away from a madman, only to fall in the hands of another one.'

## Chapter 1000: Sacred Flames

The girl looked at Alex with expectant eyes as it seemed she truly wished to become his slave. Alex couldn't help but feel uncomfortable at the sight.

"Forget about it. I'm not making anyone a slave," he said.

"Tsk, then at least make me your wife," she said.

"No," Alex said.

"Why? Do you not want me? I'm the strongest female in my tribe that has yet to marry. Look at my hips, I can give you so many children. My breasts are quite big too. Just look at i—"

"Stop it. I do not wish to see your breasts. All I want for now are some answers. Depending on the answers, I might just leave right now," Alex said.

"Oh, go ahead. What do you want to ask?" Li Yun looked disappointed, but she still respectfully spoke now that Alex had shown his strength.

"First of all, is there any place with Qi in the southern continent?" he asked.

"I don't know," the girl said. "I've never seen this Qi in my life. I've only ever heard it from the elders."

'Hmm, then I should probably ask these elders when I get to the Stepstones tribe,' Alex thought. He would also have to search for his father when he got there.

He had already searched the caravan or whatever it was that he was part of. All he could see was the different carriages being pulled by different beasts that seemed to have been tamed.

The humans were the ones walking, so he checked inside the carriages and found them to be mostly filled with various different fishes, which surprised him quite a lot.

"Where did you get the fish from?" he asked.

The girl's eyes narrowed. "How did you know?" she asked.

"That's not an answer," Alex said.

"Hmph, we got it from the Maroon Bay," she answered.

"Maroon bay? Where is that exactly?" he asked.

"In the direction where the sun comes up from," she said. "We go there from time to time to get ourselves some food."

"You have to go to the east to get food?" Alex asked. "And you have to take an entire caravan with you?"

"What do you expect us to do? It's very far you know? It takes us nearly two weeks just to reach there," she said.

"And yet you still go? Is there absolutely no food in the Wasteland other than these fishes?" he asked.

"There are," she said. "We can eat the beasts, but mostly their meat is too tough to chew and the weaker folks in the tribe can't even chew on it. So, we have to go get the soft meat from the ocean."

"And it takes you 2 weeks to reach there, huh? Is the east that closer than the west?" he asked.

"West is closer," she said. "If we were to go west, it would take us no more than 10 days."

"Then why do you go east?" he asked with a curious expression.

"The west is off limits. There are very strong tribes there and we absolutely cannot offend them in the slightest," she said.

"I see," Alex said as he took in the information he heard. "How much longer till we reach the Stepstones tribe?"

"About 2 more days," she said. "Maybe 3, or even 4. It's hard to say how long it will take on the return since the people will have to walk instead of riding the carriage."

"I noticed that," Alex said. "Do you guys not have Storage bags to keep the fish in?" he asked.

"What's a storage bag?" the girl asked.

"That explains it," he said as he sighed. He thought of some questions he wanted to learn about and soon learned a bit more about the Wastelands.

To his surprise, there were absolutely no cities in this place. There were only tribes that liked to stay reclusive.

There were apparently hundreds if not thousands of tribes, and each one stayed about a day's worth of travel away.

In a Saint realm Qi cultivator's term, they would be about an hour away at most.

Even though there were so many tribes, there was one thing that was true among all of them. Strength meant status.

You either have to be very strong physically or have the potential to become very strong. This was why, even when weak, a youth was regarded more favorably than an older person.



Alex tried asking about how the people got stronger, and it turned out that it wasn't much different than how the Blazing Earth sect's people went through body cultivation.

The people would use slaves or take turns hurting each other to the point where one of them couldn't even stand. At that point, they would stop for the wounded person to heal.

When healed, they would come back stronger than before.

'No wonder she said slaves beat their masters. That is the only way to get strong here, he thought.

While the question of how they got stronger was answered, there was one other question that arose in Alex's mind.

"How do you guys heal?" he asked.

As far as he understood, there was absolutely no possibility for someone to make pills. Heck, even medicinal paste seemed to be impossible to make with how the ingredients would be hard to find in a place like this.

Other than that, he thought of the aura-absorbing technique that the disciples of the Blazing Earth sect used, but even that should be impossible as Qi wasn't available around here at all.

"Through the sacred flames of course," the girl said.

"The sacred flames? What's that?" Alex asked.

The girl looked confused. "The sacred flames are the sacred flames, of course. What else would it be?" he asked.

"Where do you get the sacred flames from?" he asked.

"Nowhere? You can't find the sacred flames anywhere but in the various tribes. It's been burning since generations ago, so there really is no making it. It's just there," she said.

'Flames that heal? So weird,' he thought. Just then, he thought of something and looked at the girl. "What's the color of your Sacred flames?" he asked.

"Uhh... yellow, red, and some blue I think," she said.

"So... it's a phoenix flame?" he asked.

"What's a phoenix?" the girl asked.

"Nevermind," he said. If his guess was right then it was most definitely the Vermilion bird's flames. 'Those flames heal?' he thought. The only thing he could remember of those flames was when they instantly burned his hand. There was no healing there.

"How exactly do the flames heal by the way? Do you use it to cauterize the wounds perhaps?" he asked.

"No, you just sit by its side. You never want to touch the flame itself. The sacred flames heal those that come beside it. However, for those that dare lay their hands upon, they kill them without mercy," she said.

'Does sound like the flames I saw yesterday,' Alex thought.

"What about cut-off limbs? Can your flames heal those?" he asked.

"The flames cannot heal which you do not have," she said. "If you lose a body part, you have to bring it with you when you heal, or you never will."

"I see," Alex said. "I'm starting to get more curious about your tribe now."

Three days passed rather quickly. The caravan never stopped for food or drink as the men that had come along in this journey were body cultivators that needed very low sustenance to go by their day.

They would take maybe a few drinks from their water pouch and eat some dry meats. Other than that, they simply walked without resting.

They would rest once they reached their tribe.

Along the way, Alex saw 2 different caravans go past them and checked for his father on both of them. Unfortunately, he was in neither one.

If Li Yun was right and just the Wastelands alone were larger than the Crimson Empire, then it would take him months, if not years to find his father.

He definitely had to find a way out of here faster than that.

Finally, the group arrived at the Stepstones tribe's location.

Li Yun walked out in front of him and Alex went behind her.

"My daughter!" a buffed-up man with a gray beard and no hair stood in front of her. "Tell me you were successful in this venture."

"Of course, father," she said. "We brought back quite a few fish this time around. I even managed to find myself a husband candidate."

"What? You found yourself a husband?" the man who could only be chief spoke loudly in shock.

"It's him, father," she turned around to point at Alex who was looking at the massive canyon that lay beyond where the tribe had made their stay in.

"What?" he turned around with a confused look. "I told you, I'm not going to be your husband."

The chief looked at Alex weirdly as well and turned towards her daughter. "Daughter, your father is old and doesn't understand these jokes you make. If you really found a potential husband then tell me who he is. No need to point at that skinny man that has probably never seen the light of day."

"I'm not joking, father," she said. "I want him to be my husband. No, your daughter hasn't gone mad. While he may not look like it, he's actually very strong."

"While coming here, he slapped me so hard that I cried," she said with a blush on her tanned face.

"Is that true?" the father turned towards Alex.

"Uh..."

"Why don't you test him, father? You'll see whether I'm telling the truth or not."