

Alchemy 1521

Chapter 1521: Painting Trial

Alex was done with 4 of the trails already. He had completely passed through the Alchemy and Talisman trials and had nearly reached the end with the Artifact and Formation trials. He could have returned and tried to see if he could go further, but he saw no point.

There wasn't much to gain by passing a single test in those two categories. It wasn't like he failed because of missing ingredients like he had with the talisman trial.

So, he was intent on moving away from them all.

There were only two trials he hadn't visited yet, and having decided from early on that he wouldn't be visiting the Music trials, the only one that Alex had yet to visit was the Painting trials.

He was quite looking forward to this one. Over the last 6 months since he left Goldheart City, aside from his physical body, his focus had been on painting. He had done a lot of other things at that time as well, but painting was what he came back to each time.

He arrived in the dark room where the painting trail was held, quickly surrounded by black walls all around him. He sat down on the colorless floor and quickly brought out a canvas which he placed before him.

Then he finally looked toward the master of this trial. It was a... deer. Alex was surprised to see a deer standing in the distance where he would have expected a human to stand. This trial master seemed to not care about the fact that he didn't have a human body to mix well with the humans of this world.

The deer was a soul nonetheless, so he hovered there in the distance, waiting for something. A minute passed by before he finally said anything.

"You have all arrived in the Paintings trial, and I see a lot of repeating faces," he said. "I'll address the ones that don't know me yet. I am Zin Gaunhong, the trail master for Painting. Don't let my body fool you, I was an excellent painter when I had a body. As you might know, you don't need human hands to paint."

Alex slowly nodded. Qi could replace hands at a very early stage in one's cultivation.

"Unlike the other trials you have been to, the Painting trial will be very simple. You have to pass exactly 3 tests. If you can complete them all, you will have passed all the tests."

"So, to start, I will give you a very easy test," the Deer said. "Paint me."

Alex paused for a moment. Paint... the deer? That was going to be one of the first 3 tests? He was quite surprised by this test because of how easy it was.

'Just painting? No Intent usage?' Alex wondered. Painting had a rather steep learning curve at the start with many different elements to keep track of. The subject, the background, the colors, the highlights, the shadow, the one, the clarity, the abstractness— there were so many things that one could mess up when they only just started painting.

However, after some time, one could go past this learning curve after having learned everything and easily paint a very good painting. This was very much true for cultivators, and even more so for Alex himself.

In just the first month of training, Alex had already understood the core of painting and could make paintings that were considered the best. So, painting the deer would be no problem for him at all.

He took the Color artifact he had and started creating all the important colors that would be necessary for this painting. Using his knowledge of color theory, he created every single color he could need for this painting and created a palette with it. Then, he went on to paint.

His brush flickered on the canvas, the strokes both thick and thin. He made the deer's head, the deer's antlers, and the deer's body. The deer's current body was transparent bluish-white with some of its original colors peeking through. He captured that.

He gave a slight brown color to its fur, along with some brown color to its antler. Its nose was a tad black and the eyes a deep red. The overall body of the deer was brown, which he added while making sure to neither overshadow the transparency of the art of the bluish-white of the soul.

He waited on the shadows and went on to do the rest of the painting where he drew the background. The background as of yet was a dull black color as everything but the blue soul was darkness to Alex.

He painted the background with black paint, copying as much as he could from what he was seeing. Once he was done with the foreground and background, he moved on to putting the finishing touches on the painting.

There were no shadows to add on the deer precisely, but there were instances where the bluish-white color of the soul was more blue than the rest, like the antlers or fur spots around its body. Its hooves were more blue than normal as well, and so were locations where the deer's skin was cramped a bit, like the neck or the pits of its limbs.

Once completed, Alex moved away from the painting and looked at it from a distance. He looked at the painting intently and then at the deer that floated in the distance. He was happy to see that he hadn't made any big mistakes at all, if any.

The room suddenly changed into a bright red color, surprising Alex. He hadn't even submitted the painting yet, but it seemed as if the deer had seen his art and had considered him passed.

He happily nodded and put the new painting into his storage ring before pulling out another empty canvas. He was ready for the next trial.

He had to wait a while before it began.

"Here is your second trial," the Deer said. "Make a painting with a very strong Intent. It does no matter how complex the painting is. You can leave it for all I care. As long as the Intent it holds is strong, you'll pass."

Intent. That was pretty easy for Alex. He could immediately think of what to draw as well. And he got to it.

Red, Yellow, and Orange shades of colors were prepared according to what Alex thought was necessary and then he started painting.

Fire. Flames. Heat. Burning.

Alex kept in mind what it was that he wanted to draw, and focused his all into it.

The painting itself was simple. It was a small tongue of flame that burned in the center of the canvas. However, the Intent it held was anything but that.

The fire gave off an aura of True Fire Dao, that would appear complex and inconceivable to anyone that did not have it. Everyone including the Deer soul did not have it.

When Alex was done with the painting, pouring his Intent into it as he had learned for the past half a year, he was left with a painting that could be considered to be sent into the Hall of Fame for the Royal School of Painting.

The Red walls turned to Blue at once and he had completed the second test.

Chapter 1522: Third Trial

Alex wondered how many individuals failed the first and second tests. The two tests were diametrically opposite in what they wanted. One wanted to test the skill of a painter, and the other wanted to test the skill of a cultivator.

And Alex had no doubt that the next one was going to be a mix of the two. He wondered how many would pass that one. How many had? He hadn't heard of any passing this final test. Surely it wasn't that hard, right?

Anyone who passed the first two tests would have no problem completing the third one if the task was to do the two tests in one painting. So Alex couldn't help but be curious about what the actual test would entail.

He waited a decent amount before the last test started.

The blue walls around him suddenly lost all color, changing to a bright white color that surprised Alex. Was there a mistake? Had he just passed?

He looked for a hint as to what was going on, and at that moment the Deer spoke to calm everyone down.

"The light had changed to no misguide your colors for the third test," it spoke. "And the third test is here."

"You have 2 days to create the best painting you can with a very strong aura to it," the deer said.

Alex was surprised at the fact that the test was what he had expected. He wouldn't have been surprised if it had been something else.

'But that's so easy,' he thought. 'How many painters complete the trial each time it is open? Hundreds?'

He took his brush and started drawing. He had been to various different cities in the Gold Kingdom, so he decided to draw an icy mountain he saw in one of those cities that had gold shining in most of its cliff walls.

It was in the Golden Mountain range, so one could easily see the gold in it.

Alex began painting it.

A sprawling city at the bottom, with most of its buildings clad in gold. A massive wall that surrounded the city with a barely visible dome around it.

The outside of the city was covered in snow with barely any signs of life peeking through the thick white plane. Beyond the city and the snowfield was the mountain that was the main focus of his painting.

Despite being part of the mountain range, this icy mountain stood alone, dwarfing everything else around it. The top of the mountain was completely white and colors only started showing once they reached a little below it.

Black and gold shined through the spots in the mountain that wasn't covered in snow. About a third of the mountain was covered in this, and the gold almost looked like decoration on the mountain.

Beyond the mountain was the spotless silver moon that forever shined brightly in the night sky.

For the golden bits throughout the painting, he made sure to add every bit of Intent from his Dao of Metal he had into the painting. That was the most important point of the painting, so he did so exactly.

Alex put on the finishing touches to the painting and put down his brush when he was done. He took a deep breath and looked at the painting somewhat satisfied.

The art itself was quite good and the Intent from the Metal Dao was certainly coming through his painting. He had managed to make both of the two things work, so all he had to do now was to wait for the deer to—

"Try again!" the deer's voice floated into his mind.

Alex paused for a moment. "What?" he asked, but the deer didn't seem intent on answering. It was already focused elsewhere, its care for Alex and his painting long gone.

Alex waited in the hope that the deer would say something, but he could only hope. Nothing happened.

'So I failed?' he asked himself. How could he fail? He checked his own painting once more, looking at it from a critical eye. The art looked fine. There was nothing amateurish as far as he could tell, and the aura of the Dao of Metal was certainly sensible from it.

So why had he failed?

"Did I make some mistake I can't see?" he questioned himself. But then another possibility came up that made him frown. "Or is even a painting of this level not good enough?"

If he had to bet, he would definitely bet on the last one. His painting, one that was certainly to turn heads if it was placed in a hallway, was not good enough for this deer.

'So that's how there aren't many individuals that pass the trial with a white glow," he thought to himself. 'This deer must only be happy with a quality that can place you in the Hall of Fame.'

He sighed in disappointment at his failure, but at least he hadn't been sent out. "I have another chance," he thought. "That is good."

Alex brought out another canvas and thought for a while as to draw what exactly. He needed one with more aura, so believed it had to be a fire-related painting. With True Fire Dao, he believed that it was the only one he could place a lot of aura into.

'A fire-related painting,' he thought, waiting for some inspiration, one he hadn't already used before.

Inspiration struck and his mood soured a little. It wasn't something he wanted to remember, but he was inspired to paint it. And it certainly did involve fire so he didn't find any reason to not draw it.

The background was the edge of a barren cliff, beyond which was a slightly brighter but still barren desert. On the cliff were a group of men and women, all half naked, standing around something at the edge of the cliff.

The sun was directly overhead in the sky, but the bright light seemed to have little effect on the dark and gloomy atmosphere in the painting.

Next to the cliff were a bunch of dead bodies, all wrapped up in fur and leather of the best kind. There was one in particular that Alex made the highlight of the painting.

A single corpse that he focused on.

Then, he dipped his brush in bright red paint and pasted it onto the center.

The corpses burned. Fire of red, pink, yellow, and purple surrounded them. The surrounding humans cast a long dark shadow because of the burning pyre at the center.

The fire in the painting felt hot and dangerous, but the death was what made it feel so real. Alex drew and drew and drew as he remembered the day back in the Wasteland, in the Stepstones tribe when he had to watch as the chief burned his daughter's body along with the many that had died in the beast attack.

He felt sadness once again, but he ignored it as he drew and drew until he was finally done.

He let the brush drop to the ground and looked at the complete painting of the corpses that burned in phoenix fire. He could feel not just the aura of fire from this one, but also the aura of death.

This was certainly one of, if not, the best painting he had made since he began to paint.

Chapter 1523: Emotions

"Try again!" the voice of the Deer flowed into Alex at once.

Alex looked up in confusion. "What?" he couldn't help but ask. Had he failed again? With such an incredible painting?

'Hell no!' Alex thought. This was one of the best paintings he had made. Not counting the art, the aura alone would be enough to put it into conversation for placing this painting into the Hall of Fame.

And he had failed with this? He didn't believe it deserved to fail.

"What's wrong with this one?" he asked loudly in frustration. He knew he wasn't going to get an answer but he needed to vent. He needed to find a way to get his frustration with the situation out—

"Not good enough," the Deer responded, stunning Alex into silence for a moment. "It's an improvement on the first one, but it is still not good enough."

"Why not?" Alex asked. "If you want me to put more aura into it, I'm not sure I can do that. I already used the best Dao I could, so there's not much I can do. Might as well send me out at this point."

"I am here to judge your painting, not your knowledge of Dao. Make one." The deer didn't say anything anymore, leaving Alex to contemplate on the situation.

Alex had to sit down to contemplate what he had to do. Even the painting he made with one of his deepest and saddest memories didn't work. Why? He asked himself.

The answer had already been given to him by the deer. This was a test of painting skills, not of Dao. Putting his knowledge of Dao into the painting wouldn't help him here, not like it had helped him with the second test. If he wanted to place an aura in there, it couldn't be from a dao, but something else.

Something that one could feel through a painting.

Emotions.

He had put aside his emotion for the last painting, focusing his Intent only on the Dao. While that had brought out a painting that could be used to help others learn the mysteries of the Dao, when he really thought about it, it had failed as a painting.

It had some emotion, but nothing spectacular. He had felt so many things while making that, and yet... he had chosen to hide it, so it didn't affect his painting. That had been a stupid choice.

'Do I redraw it then?' he wondered. But his heart didn't want to. He doubted he could bring out the same emotion he had just now. He needed a different source for his emotions that he wanted to paint about.

Should he go with a memory? Or something entirely new but filled with the emotion he felt.

He couldn't decide.

He sat on the floor, trying to come up with ideas. It had only been an hour since the third test had begun, so he had ample time to come up with something.

'Something with emotion... something that comes from deep within me... something I care about.' What did he care about? His parents, his daughter, Pearl, Whisker, his family, his master, his friends, and many others.

He cared about the reason why he was sent here. He cared about why Bai Jingshen chose him. He cared about the immortal realm and the immortals there.

He cared about his cultivation journey. He cared about breaking through.

He cared about...

He realized what he cared about right now. He realized what to draw.

But he didn't move. He sat there, preparing for as long as he could. This was something he couldn't just draw. He had to prepare himself. He had to be ready for what he was going to draw.

He spent the entire day calming himself, calming his heart before he finally began.

When he did, his heart was empty. Completely vacant with nothing there but a single emotion.

Grief.

And he painted that grief.

Alex was hardly aware of what he was painting. He didn't care. He didn't care about the colors, about the art, about the canvas. He didn't even care about the painting

He only cared about taking out what he felt and placing it somewhere. Painting just happened to be the thing that allowed him to do this.

At this moment, his emotion was what was the most important to him. His grief. His feeling of loss. The painting was the outlet.

And he let the emotions flow.

He marked with a black paint here and a green one here. He added a bit of pink on the left side, and some yellow on the right. A bit of white on the eyes with a hint of blue.

He painted what he remembered. It had been a while since he had seen her, but he knew what she looked like. He remembered the young girl that he played with as a child, the only one he cared about, the one that was his sister.

He drew Hannah.

He had tried to let go of the hope of finding Hannah for some time. That was what was stopping him from breaking through for nearly a year now. He knew he needed to give up on the hope, but it was difficult. It was not something he could just let go of.

He couldn't bear the thought of disappointing his aunt, by bringing back the news that he couldn't find her daughter after she had recently received the knowledge of her husband's death.

But Alex couldn't do that anymore. He would have to disappoint her. He would have to come to terms with the fact that finding Hannah was a lost cause.

He needed to understand in his heart of hearts that Hannah was long gone.

So, whatever hope he might have had, he let it flow with his grief and sadness, as he painted them onto the canvas where the young girl's face was now becoming more and more real.

The deer looked in surprise, feeling the aura that came from Alex's painting even before he was finished. It continued keeping its senses on him, carefully sensing through things to see what was going on.

Through just the pages, it could also feel the sense of loss and grief. It could feel the sadness.

It had been a while since the deer had felt emotion this strong being painted into a canvas. The last time... when had the last time been?

A memory of a young man floated in the deer's mind. The deer remembered the painting. A woman and her son sat close to each other, painting something vivid on a canvas. That had been the only painting in a few centuries to have successfully moved it.

And it seemed there was another now.

'Incredible,' it thought and moved on to helping other participants, giving them some hints here and there as it had to Alex the day before.

Alex felt his heart empty up completely, and the final stroke of his brush gave him the cathartic release he had been hoping for such a long time.

He dropped his brush and could only stare at the painting in front of him. The image had been a cacophony of colors, mixed together in an unseemly way. However, somehow, there seemed to be a symphony between them that created an overall picture of a young girl with a bright smile on her face.

Chapter 1524: Sign

Looking at the picture, he felt no more grief. No more sadness. He only felt a melancholic happiness as he remembered the past when he had interacted with her.

He took a deep breath and knew deep inside that he had done it. He had let go of Hannah completely.

"Who is she?" the deer's voice drifted into his mind.

"My sister— my cousin," he quickly answered.

"Why is the image of your cousin that is smiling so widely, giving such an aura of extreme sadness?" the deer asked.

"Because she is very much likely dead now," he said. "This is my way of dealing with the grief early on."

"Do you not know if she is dead or not?" the Deer asked.

"Not really," Alex said.

"Then why do you grieve? When you should be hoping," the Deer said.

"Because it was interfering with my breakthrough," he said. "My hope had ended up becoming my Inner Demon."

"I see," the deer said. "So you can break through now?"

"I am confident," Alex said.

"Good luck!" the Deer said.

Alex smiled widely and looked back at the deer. "Thank you." He picked up the brush and the painting of Hannah and placed it into his storage ring. Even as he did, the teleportation aura had already surrounded him.

He let it grab onto him and then disappeared out of the trial hall.

He arrived outside surrounded by white light once again. This time, he didn't wait for the soldiers to come to him. He left on his own.

Even as he walked away, he could hear the crowd that had seemingly lost all sense of understanding of what was happening.

Once was a miracle.

Twice was unthinkable.

But what was thrice? How were they to feel when someone completed three different trials, where passing even one was difficult enough to only have a person or two every few decades?

Even the Gold King was sufficiently shocked to the point that he forgot to go greet Alex altogether. It was only when his subordinates reminded him that he moved. However, by that point Alex had already arrived outside the hotel and entered it.

He tried contacting Alex in the hotel, but the two elders stopped him.

"Our apologies, your Majesty. But our King had commanded us to not let anyone inside," Yao Ning spoke up.

"Even if it's me?" the Gold King asked.

"Even if it's the Azure Dragon himself," Yao Ning answered.

The Gold King was shocked. "His Majesty must be tired then," he said. "I can't imagine what it would require out of someone to complete 3 different trials that are otherwise known as being impossible for most people. He must be completely drained."

The two elders nodded.

"Do you know when I should return?" the Gold King asked.

"I'm sure Your Majesty can make the judgment when he sees the signs," the two elders said. They left, leaving the Gold King out there alone.

"Signs?" he thought to himself. "What signs?" He had wanted to ask that, but the two elders had left before he could.

He returned back to where he was staying and told his subordinates what he was told. "Signs? What signs?" one of the men from the Head Legion who was his subordinate asked.

"I don't know," the Gold King said. "But that is what they said. Surely the King of the Southern Continent isn't trying to not see me by making these excuses, right?"

His subordinates said nothing. The Gold King felt a bit down. He was a new king, he knew that, but he was trying his best. What more could he do? He hoped his status as a new king wasn't what was driving away Alex.

"Ughh... I shouldn't have acted so close. That was probably why he wanted to not see me," he thought and couldn't help but swallow a sigh that was forming in him. "Were they truthful about the sign?"

"The subordinates said nothing.

"Make the judgment when you see the sign," the Gold King repeated to himself what the elders had told him. "What could they have meant by that? Are they going to throw up some colors in the sky or—"

A strange sensation passed through the King, stopping his thought at once. His eyes narrowed a bit and he turned his head to look in a certain direction. His subordinates did the same.

"Is that..."

"Someone is breaking through."

The King looked in surprise. "I have never sensed such a strong sensation when a Saint breaks through," he said. "Not even when my master broke through to the Saint Transformation realm did he produce such a strong result," he said.

"Well, from what I understand, the sensation is strong between each major realm as well as how strong one's knowledge of Dao is," one of the men said.

"And that direction... isn't that where the Southern Continent's monarch resides?" another one asked.

"Is it? Oh, it is," the Gold King realized. "Ah! Was this the sign they were talking about?" he thought. 'That must have been why? He was hurrying to break through. He wasn't running away from me.' That gave him a bit of a relief.

"I see," he spoke to himself. "It seems the King of the Southern Continent is breaking through to the Saint Soul realm.

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Alex was surprised when he opened his eyes again and found out that nothing had gone wrong. But then again, maybe he shouldn't have been surprised. Everything he did before was in preparation for this after all.

With so much preparation, the Inner Demon had nothing to use on him anymore. That obstacle had been quite easy to pass this time around.

Alex felt glad, but everything wasn't over yet. He had only passed the Inner Demon's assault. The real breakthrough had yet to happen.

The most important one in a long time as well.

At the start of the Saint Core realm, everything inside Alex's Dantian, aside from the two Yang and Yin sources, had turned into a golden sphere known as his Golden Core.

Throughout the Saint Core realm, the Golden Core had improved and enlarged in size, growing stronger and bigger with time, giving him more and more cultivation. However, that wasn't all it had done.

At the same time, it had also made a connection with his Spiritual sea, slowly forming a Spirit that would then house it. Now, the spirit had fully formed.

And it was time for the spirit to come out like a bird breaking through its egg to come out to the outer world.

As Alex continued, the Golden Core slowly melted inside the Dantian, dripping gold as it did. With each drip, Alex could feel his cultivation base improving, growing bigger and stronger.

He could feel the Saint Soul realm that he was stepping on.

The more it dripped, the more the spirit managed to show itself. After half of it was melted and turned into Qi once more, the spirit could finally be seen.

Alex saw the spirit inside of his Dantian, and then saw his body through the spirit's eyes. They were both the same. He couldn't help but smile at the sight and feel somewhat proud.

He now had his own Nascent Soul.

Chapter 1525: Nascent Soul

As the Golden Core dripped further and further, more and more of the Nascent soul became visible. The spirit became freer and freer with each drop of Qi that pooled down below.

Alex continued cultivating and doing his best to breakthrough, and each with step he went further than before.

Then, after some time, the last drop of the Golden Core dropped into the massive pool that was underneath it and the Nascent soul was finally free.

A soft ringing sound reverberated throughout his entire body the moment the Nascent Soul came free. The moment he became free.

Alex could suddenly feel his spiritual energy growing stronger, growing thicker. Qi around his surroundings was pulled into his body as if by a vortex and the Nascent Soul used it to improve itself, make it stronger.

It was no different than a newborn baby's first cry, and it lasted no more than a minute. But in that minute, Alex felt his spiritual sea grow much larger and his spiritual sense became even stronger than it already was.

It had always been monstrous, having started improving his spiritual sense since when he was in the Self Tempering realm, and improving it throughout the True realms and most of the Saint realm with his small mask.

Now, it had improved even further, making his spiritual sense that much stronger. He couldn't tell exactly, but he had odd confidence in himself now that he was most likely as strong as a late Saint Soul realm cultivator, if not close to reaching the Saint Transformation realm

He doubted it though.

With another clear ring, the Nascent Soul in his Dantian got into a meditating position and Alex could tell that the breakthrough had become complete.

He had entered the Saint Soul realm.

Alex sat there for a while, looking over himself. Both his Qi and Spiritual energy had gotten far more potent than before, stronger. He let a bit of Qi flow out into his palm and looked at it with a hint of anticipation.

With this strong of a Qi, he could fight Saint Transformation realm cultivators for sure. So long as they didn't use their Immortal Qi that was. There would be no way to do anything to survive that.

He always shuddered when he remembered that clash from 6 months ago.

"At least, this means I don't have to slow down my cultivation progress anymore," he thought. "I can speed it up now that I don't have to worry about anything."

He became happy knowing that his cultivation speed would skyrocket once again, now that it didn't have to be stagnant any longer. However, he had heard that Saint Soul realm cultivators had a harder time cultivating.

But then again, he had heard the same thing about every other realm. This one couldn't be that different. If it was, he would find a way to speed up his cultivation certainly as he always had.

Ignoring that, he focused on the main thing that had improved this time around. His spiritual sense.

'How far does it go now?' he wondered. He spread out a weak spiritual sense around him, seeing how far he could send it out. After a minute or so, trying to hide from other spiritual senses, he was surprised to find that his spiritual sense now spread more than 70 kilometers wide.

That was nearly double what he had been able to do previously.

'So strong,' he thought to himself. That was quite the distance he had captured with his spiritual sense. He had seen past the mountain range, past a large field of snow with travelers walking and flying through the thick snow, making their way to this town and the one next over.

He cut off his spiritual sense just then, letting it linger in the air for a while before disappearing. Then, he focused it back on himself. On the one thing he had been looking forward to for a long, long time now.

His spiritual sense entered his body, looking at his core now. The golden liquid, his Qi, was slowly losing color, turning back into transparent Qi as it always had been. At the bottom, the Yang and Yin sources continued spinning slowly, as it always had.

The Yin bead was slightly stronger than the Yang source, but not very much. At this very moment, it wasn't even converting any of his Qi into the strong Yin Qi just yet. It did show signs of starting, however.

Alex wondered if there was going to be any change in the rate at which it all changed.

He focused on his Dantian for a little longer, then checked the spirit that floated above the Qi in the empty space of his Dantian. His Nascent Soul.

It had the same transparency and hint of blue and white as the Immortal Soul he had seen in the trials. Initially, it had been naked, but now it seemed it was wearing a robe.

The exact robe he was currently wearing.

'So it copies what I'm wearing?' Alex thought for a moment, but that didn't feel right. 'No, it copies my perception of myself. That's it.'

He looked at the Nascent Soul for a little longer before looking even deeper inside. He arrived inside his Spiritual Sea and looked around. It was massive at this point.

The deep and cold waters below him that were the Spiritual Energy was now much, much thicker than it had ever been. The space seemed to have widened a lot more now as well. The edges of this world now seemed so much wider.

"Congratulations," Godslayer's voice flew from his right.

Alex turned to look toward the crystalline spherical spirit that floated next to him. There was a thick layer of black smoke that followed behind him, all of which threatened to dissipate into the air, but for some reason was kept tightly held, as if with a net.

"I didn't expect you to do it so easily," he said. "You've become so much stronger now, with just that breakthrough."

Alex smiled. "Thank you. I've been trying for a while," he said. "Are you handling that Shadow Aura well?"

"This?" Godslayer asked. "It's good enough. Although I would much appreciate it if you could find me a way to convert it to Darkness aura."

"Is it difficult?" Alex asked curiously.

"No, not difficult," Godslayer said. "Just... annoying. I can't move as freely as I want to."

Alex chuckled a little and nodded. "I'll see what I can do," he said. "No promises though."

He looked away from Godslayer and at the massive chunk of floating Silver mountain. It no longer looked like the mountain it had been so long ago. Now, it wasn't even half the size.

Alex had been absorbing its aura rapidly, improving his own Space aura, learning more of Space's truths and laws. If he continued for long, he would most likely be able to learn more Space Daos.

But that would be something for a very distant him to think about. "I'll leave now," he said.

"Yes, go. Cultivate and stabilize your foundation," Godslayer said.

"That's not why I'm leaving," Alex said. "There's something else I have to check."

Chapter 1526: Space

Alex had to go through his chest with his spiritual sense for a while before he found anything resembling what he had been looking for. He had tried to do the same with his spiritual sense many times before and had failed each time.

However, this time around, with such a strong Spiritual sense, he could finally find it deep in his chest, close to his heart. It remained hidden so well, its barrier so strong.

But Alex found it all the same this time.

His Soul Space.

As if using some very strong space laws, his Soul Space had remained hidden from even him. To find it as he had, he had required not just a strong Spiritual energy, but also knowledge of Space itself. If not for his Dao, he would have had to wait for the Immortal realm before he could sense it with his Spiritual Sense alone.

He tried to take a peek inside with his spiritual sense, but it felt so difficult. 'Isn't this supposed to be my Soul Space?' he thought to himself. 'Why can't I see inside?'

He had the strong Spiritual Sense that he was told he would be required to peer through, but it wasn't happening. 'Is it not supposed to happen on its own?' he thought. He remembered the tearing pain he felt in his chest when Senior Yang had taken a look at his Soul Space.

"Do I force my way into my Soul Space?" he thought. That seemed to be the only way. He prepared himself mentally for the pain he was going to face. He hadn't liked it last time, and he was definitely not going to like it this time either.

He took a long and deep breath and sent his spiritual sense in.

Alex's spiritual sense flew into his soul space as easily as passing through a layer of a bubble. "H-huh?" he was surprised. "How?" he was taken aback. He had been expecting to have to fight the barrier of the Soul Space head-on, so when it didn't present itself as a problem, it had caught him off guard.

Alex took a moment to control his spiritual sense and not push it very far. He stopped right where he had entered and looked around the place with his spiritual sense.

He felt nothingness. vacuum. There was nothing in there. He pushed his spiritual sense inside even more, but there was nothing to see at all. Top and down, right and left, front and back, there was absolutely nothing. Not that he could really give any direction to this place.

It was just space. There was no orientation here, other than how he entered. And even that didn't matter since there was nothing for him to see.

Still, he couldn't help but be amazed by what it meant for him to have a Soul Space. A Soul Space, HIS Soul Space. He would no longer need a storage ring or a storage bag at all.

There was no air here, but if he could somehow manage to bring some here, then maybe he could bring the silkworms here and let them stay. If he could make a big enough change, then maybe Pearl and Whisker could come here as well, although he would have to make sure living things could live here.

He was fascinated by his soul space and more than anything the size of it. His spiritual sense was currently reaching over 100 kilometers in all directions when stretched to the maximum with great effort. That wasn't just 100 kilometers in one direction, but rather all.

A sphere with a radius of 100 kilometers, was the area he was currently occupying with his spiritual sense. And somehow, it was all empty. He was supposed to have too many things in here for it to be so empty. That could only mean that there was some other location in his soul space where the items were.

And he knew for a fact that there were more items in here. It was just not where he was. But how did he check the other places in his soul space? His spiritual sense didn't extend further than this. Could he move here somehow?

He hoped there was someone he could ask. Would Godslayer have any idea?

As he was wondering, he caught sight of something when he spread his spiritual sense to the maximum distance he could. He noticed a small rock floating aimlessly in the vast space. He paused for a moment when he realized what it was.

'An ore?' he thought to himself. 'Oh! A tungsten ore. The ore I got from back when I first went to the Endless Tunnel?' He was a little surprised, to say the least. He searched for anything else, but it was only the one that was there for now.

So, he would just have to experiment with the ore for now. 'How do I bring it out?' he thought to himself for a moment. Would it be as simple as a storage bag or a storage ring?

He could only try and find out.

He was already reaching the ore with his spiritual sense, so all he had to do now was call for it to pull it outside. In an instant, it disappeared.

Alex's focus instantly moved outside and he saw the stone appear a small distance away from his chest, landing on the ground solidly in front of him. The formation in the room lighted up, stopping all sound and any potential damage to the room.

"Not bad," Alex said out loudly. "Now, what about sending it back?"

He applied the same technique he would normally and simply changed the target to his Soul Space. Once again, the ore went into him, and Alex quickly followed to go check it.

When he went it, the ore was right there again, and this time it wasn't floating around. Instead, it just sat there, unmoving.

"Okay," he said to himself with a satisfied smile. "What else can I do?"

Chapter 1527: Traversing The Soul Space

After understanding that he could always enter back where he wanted to in his Soul Space, Alex left for a while to go see Godslayer again.

"Hmm? Why are you back so early?" Godslayer asked. "Do you want something?"

Alex felt a little puzzled. "Do you not see what is happening?" he asked.

"I see what you see, and right now I don't see you looking at anything. I assume you're focusing on your Nascent Soul for now," he said.

"No, actually," Alex said. "I do have to see what I can learn there later, but for now I'm focusing on my Soul Space."

"Your Soul Space?" Godslayer's voice was laden with surprise. "Right, you did have that already. Did you finally manage to find it?"

"I did, and I entered," Alex said. "But... it's massive."

Godslayer chuckled a bit. "How massive?" he asked.

The single radius that Alex gave was enough for Godslayer to become speechless for a while. "That's... that's massive," he said. "And it's supposed to be larger?"

"Supposed to, yeah," Alex said. "But I'm not sure how I can move or how I can do anything else. I was wondering if you had any advice."

"Why?" Godslayer asked with a confused tone. "I've never had a—" He paused. "Actually, never mind. I do know a bit."

Alex listened to what he had to do, based on Godslayer's somewhat vague information about Soul Space. From what he understood, it was Godslayer's knowledge from a time when he was roaming the Immortal realms with hosts and whatnot.

Alex took into account what he was told and started consciously moving himself through the Soul Space rather than his spiritual sense.

It took a bit of experimentation, but he managed to figure out that he could move the point where he entered the Soul Space as well. He couldn't tell why he could enter a random point inside the Soul Space and not the edge of it like he would with normal spiritual bags and rings.

He tried to figure out an answer, but the answer was simply too complex for him to figure out. There was most likely a truth hidden here that he would have to work very hard to understand if he even could.

He gave it not much thought after that and started traversing the Soul Space. His spiritual sense still hung around him, sensing everything in a sphere. Next to him, the ore he had found was dragged along by him.

Alex wasn't sure how fast he was moving in his soul space. There was no reference for him to contextualize his speed. Still, he believed he was going rather fast. Faster than he could on a normal terrain at least.

His question was answered half an hour later when he saw something enter the range of his spiritual sense. It moved parallel to where he was moving and moved so fast that it crossed at least a kilometer in a second.

Either the object was moving too fast, or Alex was. He quickly grabbed onto the object with his spiritual sense and carefully checked what it was.

A Saint ingredient.

The red color of the Bloodpine tree leaves that he held with his spiritual sense hadn't lost any color at all, despite being here for as long as it had. He had lost these 25 years ago.

'Almost no loss in energy?' he thought to himself. 'But how? Because of the vacuum?' he wondered if the energy simply didn't leave the ingredient because there was nowhere else for it to go.

'Not bad,' he thought to himself and continued moving.

An ingredient here. An ore there. He even found one of his swords that he had made while he was in captivity. He started getting happy at the thought of getting it all back.

And there were still so many things he had lost that he wanted back.

Despite his speed of travel, it took him a lot of time to go through his soul space. Senior Yang hadn't been lying when he had told him how large his Soul Space was.

"This has got to be larger than the Central Continent for sure," he thought. "More than twice as large. It's been hours and I still haven't reached the edges."

He was dumbstruck by the idea of a space inside of him that was as large as the continent he was on, and the genuine possibility of it being much larger than that.

He continued touring his soul space for another few hours and in that time he found many of the remaining pills, swords, and many other items he had lost. Most of what he found were scraps, unfortunately. They were either destroyed due to the old mad immortal or were damaged by the destructive Qi wind outside the Central continent.

The ones that survived were out of luck or their sheer strength.

After a while, he also found the hammer and anvil he had made such a long time ago.

Recently, he had been using a normal hammer and anvil that any Saint would use. However, this hammer and anvil were made using Starforged Tungsten, and a lot of it too. Metal Compounding, they were some of the best tools one could use while making artifacts.

He was glad to have found those now. There were a few scratches from what he saw, but nothing that degraded the hammer and anvil in the slightest bit. The same was true for the swords he had found as well, but he had particular care for the Hammer and Anvil. If they were fine, he could make all the swords he wanted to.

Alex continued his journey through the darkness, stumbling onto things here and there. His primary search here had been for 2 things.

The Nine Yang Divine Tree's seed and the World Tree's seed. As long as he found those two, he would not mind missing everything else he had here.

How far had he come now? How much longer did he have to go? Was he even moving in a straight line? Should he be moving all around?

He continued wandering, this time thoughtlessly, gathering what he could, and after a while ended up on something that he had honestly not thought about for years now.

A Sword. THE Sword, the one that Godslayer was sealed in. The one that Alex couldn't put his Qi into. The very one that was the sharpest sword he had ever seen.

It was a sword that he wished Midnight could be compared to in the future. The degree of lethality that blade held was quite enviable for a swordsman like him.

He pulled the sword closer and even brought it outside to look at it. The silver blade shined brightly in the lantern's light, reflecting the light onto the wall in its own shape.

Alex looked at the details on the blade and was surprised to see not a single scratch on it. Even the best of his swords had dents and scratches after what they had all gone through, but this sword was in the most pristine of condition ever.

'This is incredible,' he thought. 'Who could make a sword like this? An artifact god?'

He stared at the sword for a while longer before sending it back into his Soul Space. Then, he continued his journey through it once again.

Chapter 1528: Found It

Alex found what he wanted nearly a day later. He traversed the entire Soul Space for so long that he wasn't even sure how much of a distance he had covered.

However, one thing was for certain.

The size of his inner world was most certainly many times larger than just the Central continent. Many times. And the most incredible part about this was that the size extended not just in length and width, but in height as well.

Just the cross-section of his Soul Space was many times larger than the area of the Central continent. The volume that gave him was... immeasurable as he was currently.

Somewhere within this domain, he had found the World Tree's seed and the Nine Yang Divine Tree's seed. And to his surprise, they were together.

But that surprise was vastly dwarfed by the surprise of what he was looking at right now. In front of him hung the two seeds. The palm-sized seed of the yang tree was on the left and the human-sized seed of the World tree was on the right.

And both of the seeds had sprouted.

Tiny roots had grown out of each of the seeds and were in contact with each other. At the same time, they also had a small sprout on top, their infant leaves coming out from the top.

And what's more, Alex could sense Qi around the tree. The Qi wasn't as strong neither was it a lot in amount. But there was Qi, and Alex could not believe where it originated from.

"No... no way!" he thought to himself. "How can... how is this possible?"

The Qi was being created by none other than the World Tree.

"But... this... wasn't the entire reason the gods were trying to go on a war because of the World Trees seed?" he asked himself. "Wasn't it because they couldn't find any way to get it to germinate?"

That was what Senior Yang had told him after all.

"Then how?"

Alex wasn't certain, but he believed the Nine Yang Divine tree was partly the reason. He could see the brown and thick roots of the World Tree entangled with the thin and golden roots of the Nine Yang Divine Tree.

He could feel the slightest amount of heat coming from the Nine Yang Divine Tree, and when he looked even more carefully, he could see signs of the Nine Yang Divine Tree's roots reaching the World Tree's seed itself.

It was definitely part of the reason, if not the majority of the reason, why the World Tree root had started sprouting.

He couldn't help but frown at this moment. He needed to return to the Central continent and ask Senior Yang what was happening as soon as he could. This was too big a development for him to handle on his own.

"First, I need to make sure they don't wilt or die here," he thought. "Speaking of that, there should have been no sunlight here. How did they grow at all?"

To his spiritual sense, everything looked normal as if there was light all around the objects. He would require actual vision to see inside. He thought of using a recording talisman to see what was happening inside, but he had a better idea.

This was the perfect opportunity to check if Whisker could survive here or not. He could be his eyes, ears, and hand inside.

"You want me to go inside you?" Whisker asked, his confusion clear through the bond the two of them shared.

"Yes, I opened my Soul Space and there's something I need you to check there," Alex answered. "I was hoping you could help me check it."

Whisker had no reason to refuse. "Sure, when do I go?" he asked.

Alex was about to send him in immediately, but he had to stop himself. "It might be a little dangerous," he said. "Let me prepare something for you."

He brought out some blank talisman paper, and some ink, and then started drawing on it. He made runes specifically for this mission that Whisker was going to go on.

There was no air or Qi in his Soul Space, and the majority of the area was a vacuum, so he had to make talismans of protection for Whisker.

A few minutes later, he had done a pretty decent job with the talisman and he gave it to Whisker. "Use it throughout. It will protect you from all external forces and let you breathe in there. I can also control you with my spiritual sense, so I can take you out at any time."

Whisker nodded. "I'll let you know if I need help," he said.

Alex nodded back. "Let's go then."

Whisker used the talisman and a small, golden shield appeared around him, covering him entirely. Alex felt the warmth coming through that shield around Whisker.

Once he knew Whisker was ready, he sent him in.

Whisker arrived in a world of darkness, the vision shared with Alex who hadn't seen the world as such to this point. To his spiritual sense, it did not matter if there was light or not, but through Whisker's eyes, the darkness was terrifyingly deep.

And it wasn't just darkness or shadow either. It was more than that. This was nothingness altogether. It was both a fascinating and horrifying thing for both of them to experience.

Alex followed Whisker with his spiritual sense while looking through the other senses that Whisker could use as well.

Whisker let his whisker do its work. Most of what his whiskers could do was useless in this place where there was nothing, but he could sense the temperature. It was terrifyingly cold.

"Are you fine?" Alex asked, despite knowing the answer.

"Yes," Whisker said, "I don't feel much coldness at all."

Alex couldn't be sure if it was the shield that was helping Whisker, or if it was Whisker's cultivation base. "Be careful anyway," he said. "We're moving toward the seeds next."

He showed Whisker the way, letting him fly through the nothingness for nearly 50 kilometers before he arrived upon the seeds that were always within Alex's spiritual sense's range.

When he got close, Alex saw something through Whisker's eyes. It would have been imperceptible anyway, but here in the darkness, he could see a small amount of dull light coming off of the golden seed.

"There is light," Alex thought to himself. "It's so very mild, but it's there."

The Nine Yang Divine Tree's spout was giving off light, reminding Alex of the fake sun in the Forbidden Field's desert. "It might glow brighter as it glows."

"What's that?" Whisker asked, pointing at something. Alex followed his gaze and saw something hidden within the folds of the roots that he hadn't checked very thoroughly.

Hidden within the many roots was something that appeared to be nothing to the spiritual sense. But to Whisker's eyes, it seemed like a decrepit organic matter.

Alex took a closer inspection with his spiritual sense this time around and noticed what they were.

"The three leaves!" he shouted out in surprise. "Those are the leaves the Yang Tree gave me before it faded away."

He had never known what the leaves were for and had been intending to make a pill for himself when he could. It had never occurred to him at all that the leaves were meant to be nutrition for the Nine Yang Divine Tree.

"It swallowed all the energy from the leaves," Alex said softly. "No wonder why it's sprouted." He looked at the World Tree's seed next. "After sprouting, the roots must've found this seed and took hold. The question now is, did the Nine Yang roots try to swallow this as well? Did the World Tree sprout to protect itself?"

These were questions Alex was curious about, but the answers seemed impossible to gain. So, he kept searching.

"Go look around the seeds, see what else there is," Alex asked Whisker and continued looking around himself. He saw some spirit stones around the two roots, all of which were completely covered by the roots and were impossible to find without searching for them.

Other than that, there seemed nothing between the roots at all, except each other.

Whisker got closer, sensing the mild Qi surrounding him at the moment. "Brother, did you sense it?" he asked. "There's Qi here. Where did it come—"

Whisker's words stuck in his mouth when he saw one of the Nine Yang Divine Tree's roots shoot at him with a speed that was simply ridiculous. It grabbed onto him, draining the energy from the shield around him.

Whisker's face paled in fear.

"Brother!" he shouted for help, but he didn't have to.

Alex uses his spiritual sense to force the root to open up. Inside his Soul Space, his intent was king. The root forcibly opened, letting Whisker leave.

Without hesitation, Alex pulled him out into the real world.

"That was dangerous," Whisker complained. "I don't want to do it again."

He seemed to be on the verge of tears. Alex looked at the pitiful face and sighed. "Fine, I won't ask you to do it again," he said. "Not for a while at least."

Whisker nodded and quickly returned to his beast space, leaving behind the talisman. Alex picked up the talisman and looked at it for a moment before thinking about something.

He threw in the talisman and sent it directly at the two seeds again. The golden roots shot out and grabbed the talisman. Then, right in front of Alex's eyes, the energy from the talisman was completely drained.

"Is that so?" Alex thought. "You want more Qi huh? I'll see how I can help you. I will help you both grow as healthily as possible."

Chapter 1529: Arrangements

The Nine Yang Divine Tree's roots devoured any things that contained energy of any sort. Alex sent in talismans, spirit stones, pills, and useless herbs as well, and it devoured everything that got close.

That was surprising, but he wondered if that alone was good. "Surely it needs actual nutrients," he thought. 'I'll have to get some later.'

He ignored the location of the seeds for now. They had handled themselves on their own for the past 25 years they had been by themselves, so they could handle some time on their own.

Alex did think of throwing in some large pieces of land into his Soul Space to help the seeds take proper root, but he would have to wait until he went to more verdant locations than the Gold Kingdom.

He moved his senses away from the place, leaving to check where his Blood God's Manual was. It ended up being in a remote location, which he took it away from and placed it alongside the other items he had gathered up.

Then, he placed his other items in his storage ring into his Soul Space as well. Once he was done, he had a massive pile of items all ranging from extremely necessary to absolutely unneeded.

Just for the sake of safety, he took away the items, placing them further from the sprouts so that the roots didn't accidentally snatch them away. He wouldn't like it if he lost his stash of ingredients and Saint spirit stones.

After taking them aside, he started separating them based on their importance and what they were. He first separated them based on whether they were Alchemy-related or not.

Everything not related went to one pile, and the rest in another. He put cauldrons on the part that did not belong to Alchemy as it was easier to keep the cauldrons along with the other artifacts.

Then, he started separating them for what they were. Artifacts, talismans, formations, paintings, spirit stones, and anything else that wasn't a pill or an ingredient was separated into their own section.

He made some smaller separations as well, but that was just for the swords and cauldrons for now. He had to separate them to call them out easily when he could, but except that, he didn't find the will to separate the rest.

He thought of doing that when he was next bored, but not before that. He also only separated the alchemy items into pills and ingredients and stopped after that. Separating them further would take such a longer time and he didn't want to do that right now.

After he was done with just the superfluous sorting of his items, he left his soul space, deciding to check on his Nascent soul. However, he didn't find the need to do so. The moment he thought about it, he would already be looking at things from the Soul's eyes.

He was the Soul and the Soul was he. There wasn't much need to learn about the soul on his own, and the elders would most likely give him a better understanding.

He finally stood up, unsure just how long he had stayed here. He took a look at the Voidsand Hourglass in his Soul Space and saw that only 3 days had passed since he had come out of the Painting trial.

He said 'only' because it had felt like he had spent so much time trying to understand what his soul space was like. However, every person on the outside would definitely think that he had stayed in there for far too long.

"Your Majesty," Liang Shufen spoke in surprise. "You're out, finally."

"Ah, I must've made you two wait on me," he said. "I should have notified you before that I would be taking some time."

"That is alright, your majesty," Yao Ning answered. "Were there any complications on your breakthrough?"

"No, everything went fine this time around," Alex said.

"Then congratulations are in order," the old woman said with a bow. "Congratulations on reaching the Saint Soul realm, Your Majesty."

"I pray that you will reach the Saint Transformation realm soon as well, and then the Immortal realm not long after that," Liang Shufen said.

"Thank you," Alex said with a hint of a smile on his face. He asked them about their experience when they broke through to the Saint Soul realm and how a Nascent Soul affected him.

"It's no different really," Liang Shufen said. "You might think that that you are two different people right now since you have only just started, but soon enough the thought won't even cross your mind."

Alex thought for a moment. He did think he and the soul were two different people, at least at first glance. It was only when he started paying attention that the soul and he thought the same.

"Another thing is that you have to be very careful about your Soul, your majesty," Yao Ning said. "Since your soul had been taken away from your body and given a new form, it can be easily damaged. You will have to train yourself to switch between your body and soul instantly in case of danger."

"I see," Alex said, thinking to himself. There was a period of time in which his body still thought when he meant to transfer the thought to the Soul. It didn't feel much, but Alex was sure this period could be dangerous for him.

He had to be careful and practice to switch between body and soul when he had the chance.

"Your soul is vulnerable," Yao Ning continued. "Throughout Saint Soul realm, you will strengthen your soul, but it won't be enough at all. You will need talismans and other defenses constantly active."

Alex was surprised at how careful they were. He nodded still. "I will do just that," he said. He wondered if he should tell them about his Soul Space, but decided not to do it right now. He would tell them when they got suspicious.

"So," he decided to change the topic. "Is the trial over?"

"It's almost over," Liang Shufen answered. "Most of our Alchemists that did well in the 2 chances they had have given up as the queue to enter was too long. As for the ones that failed later in the trial, they have given up. If we can get about 4 more to give up, we won't have anything to worry about."

"Let them take their test," Alex said. "They can do whatever they want."

"We thought so too," Liang Shufen said. "Still we had to wait for your permission."

Alex nodded.

"Oh and your name is spread far and wide, again," Liang Shufen said.

"It's died down a little, but for the first day, every single newsboard did nothing but show your achievement here in the Trial," Yao Ning added.

"Oh!" Alex said in surprise. "And it's over now?"

"By a lot margin, but some would still do anything to get answers from you," Yao Ning answered. "Speaking of someone trying to do something to get answers, the Golden King had come to visit you multiple times in the last 2 days. Should we let him know that you're awake?"

"No," Alex said. "I will meet him myself."

Chapter 1530: Return

"Your Majesty? You should have told me. I would have come to meet you." The King of the Gold Kingdom spoke respectfully as Alex entered his place of stay.

"My apologies, King Qian. I heard you came seeking for me a few times and had to be sent back," Alex said. "I was busy dealing with my breakthrough's aftermath and didn't think anyone would be looking for me."

"Oh no, it's fine," the king said. "Congratulations on reaching the Saint Soul realm, your Majesty."

"Thank you," Alex said with a slight bow. He wondered if he sensed a hint of envy in the king's voice. Alex wondered if the King knew how old he was and was feeling jealous of Alex's cultivation base.

Qian Yanglin was at least 2 thousand years old and was only in mid Saint Soul realm. If he knew how fast Alex's cultivation base had improved, then it wouldn't be much of a stretch to think he envied him.

"Also, congratulations on clearing all the trials in the Painting trials as well, your Majesty," the King said. "I was not aware of your talent in painting."

"It's... good enough," Alex said. "I wouldn't say painting is what I can do best, but I was taught by the best."

"Right, I heard young Honglui taught you some of it," the king said. "He had done our kingdom proud by teaching you to a level that not many can ever even hope to reach."

"You should be proud of him for his achievements," Alex said with a shaking of his head.

The two kings sat and talked for a while, most of the conversation being King Qian asking a question and Alex answering it. After a while, the conversation reached its end.

"Do you plan on entering the Formation or Artifact trials to get a better result?" the king asked.

"No, I'm done with the trials," Alex answered.

"So you'll go back to traveling the kingdom?" the king asked.

"No, I'm done with that too," Alex said with a small smile. "I'm returning to the Dragon Capital now."

"Oh," the king was a little surprised. "But you've only been here for... what, 7 months?"

"A bit more, but yeah," Alex said. "I don't have anything else I need to visit here. And I have found myself in need to return to the Dragon Capital at once for something. So as soon the trial is over, I will leave with my alchemists."

"I see," the King said with a bit of understanding. "I hope your time here has been wonderful."

"It has."

Alex returned to his hotel room afterward and met up with Jai Heiyun and the others. Jai Heiyun had failed the very last test to take two pills in one cauldron and hadn't tried going in again after the second time.

Two others had reached the same level as her, failing at the final stage. Wu Shun, the alchemist he found in the Hundred Blossom Valley, had reached the 2nd to the last trial before failing. His improvement had been extraordinary as well.

"How did you pass that trial, your majesty?" Jai Heiyun asked. "I think I found the right technique, but my head hurt from having to control multiple things at once. I wasn't even dividing my attention that much more than normal, but somehow I still failed."

"It's all about Intent," Alex said. "You'll have to train your intent when you can."

"How do we do that?" Jai Heiyun asked.

Alex thought for a bit. The easiest method was to fight against someone else's Intent, but that was not so easy to find in this place. He would have to create some of his own.

"On your own, you can just push your Intent to the peak by forcing yourself to push the limits of what you can do. Make many pills at once, in multiple cauldrons. Make pills without break, day after day. That sort of thing. The more you push yourself, the stronger your Intent will be. It's not the fastest method, but certainly the one that doesn't cost you a lot."

"As for the fastest... I'll see what I can do once we return," he said. He had some ideas.

The ones that had yet to be done with the trials returned after 3 days, and Alex prepared to leave. It was time to return to the Dragon capital.

After saying his farewell to the Gold King, Alex used a teleportation platform to return to the Dragon Capital. He had wanted to take the scenic route back, but after what had happened with the Oathbreakers, he rarely got to fly around in the Gold Kingdom.

Most of the time, he was forced to use the teleportation formations.

Alex walked out of the teleportation, looking around at the bustling city that was the Dragon Capital. He got on the carriage that had been prepared for him and left his alchemists, making his way to the Dragon Palace.

The one in the carriage this time had been the old man that Alex believed was the Dragon Emperor's personal guard. The one that went by the name Guqing. Alex had always wondered if he was a member of the Long family or not.

"Senior Guqing," Alex called out to him. "Has the Emperor left closed cultivation yet?"

"No, Your Majesty," the old man said. "His Royal Majesty is still in closed cultivation. If you need something from him, I can help relay the message. I believe he is not as busy as he was before."

Alex thought for a bit. "Can you ask him when he can make some time? I have something important to talk to him," he said.

"I will let him know as soon as we arrive." The old man bowed and the conversation ended.

After returning to the Dragon Capital, some servants took Alex to the Swan courtyard, while the old man went to relay the message. After a few hours, he came looking for Alex again.

"His Royal Majesty has responded," the old man said. "He will see you in 2 days. I hope that is okay."

"That is perfectly fine," Alex said.

For the next two days, he cultivated and got used to his new soul and Soul Space that was made available to him. Then, after 2 days, one of the servants came to relay the information that the Dragon Emperor was waiting for him.

"Let's go," Alex said and followed the servant to the hall.

The Dragon Emperor turned his head to look at Alex as he entered. "I didn't expect you to message me so soon," he said. "Is it about the trade?"

"I'm afraid not," Alex said, pausing for a second before speaking. "Well, it could be."

"What did you want to talk about?" the Dragon Emperor asked.

"You are aware of the things happening in your empire, correct? Namely, the one where the players are trying to return home," he said.

"The one that is spread by that Saint Soul realm girl you brought? Yes, I'm aware of that," the Dragon Emperor said.

Alex was a little surprised, but maybe he shouldn't have been.

"It is about that," Alex said. "I was hoping you could approve it. I was hoping you would approve sending the players home."