

Alchemy 1611

Chapter 1611: Sarah

"Sarah..." Alex spoke softly, letting the words roll in his mouth

The word sent a hint of an impression passing through his mind, one that brought up a face that seemed to match somewhat to the face he was looking at right now. Only the woman in front of him seemed far better looking than the one in his memories.

He saw flashes of the woman on a couch, at a dinner table, laughing happily next to a young Hannah and... Emily? Was that what he was seeing?

He realized that the memories he was seeing did not belong to him, but rather his clone. And the clarity in them was as good as the old him could remember by the time he had gained those memories.

The older the memory was, the worse he remembered it. It was even worse than the memories he got through the Inheritance of the Undying Physique and that was only so good anyway. The most clear thing he remembered from those memories was the face of the most beautiful woman he had ever seen before.

Sarah looked at him with a hint of a frown, wondering why he was staring at her so absentmindedly. Was he somehow entranced with her?

'That cannot be,' the girl thought. 'He's a king. But... then again, he's also a man.'

She had to do something. "Your Majesty, are you alright?" she called out loud enough to grab Alex's attention.

Alex's thoughts cleared up and he finally looked at her. "Oh, I'm sorry. I was thinking about something," he said.

"About what?" the girl couldn't help but want to ask.

"I think we used to live together," Alex said. "Back around the time when the game was getting big."

The girl seemed appalled by the mere idea of what he had said. Her face hid no frown and lay it clear for Alex to see. "That is impossible. There are no circumstances where I would live with a man. I'm flattered you think of me that way, Your Majesty. But I'll have to let you know that—"

"You like women, not men," Alex said, a smile tugging on his lips. "I remember that. It's weird that I do."

Sarah's face went blank in horror. "How... how do you know that?" she asked him. "Who told you that? No one should—"

"No one told me," Alex said quickly. "I just remembered it. You told me long ago. Or wait, your clone told me. Wait no, your clone told my clone back in the Central continent. Our clone used to live together."

Alex saw the girl's face switch to disbelief and quickly added. "Not just you and me. We lived with my sister, Hannah, and your friend, Emily. She's my clone's wife now."

"Emily..." Sarah said with a hint of remembrance of something long forgotten. "Emily... she was my friend. I forgot."

There was a tinge of melancholy to her expression, one that was there for what she forgot rather than what she remembered. "I remember a sweet little girl by that name. Maybe what you said is true," the girl said, looking back at Alex with a wide smile.

"Thank you for reminding me what I had forgotten, Your Majesty," she said. "There are few things of the past that I remember now. Having any to remember is a good thing for me."

"I'm happy to be of help," Alex said. "If you have forgotten what you've remembered, you might want to go to the Northern Continent sometime in the future. There is a group of well in the east there that can return you memories of... your... past."

Alex got distracted all of a sudden, his head slowly moving to the left where he sensed multiple people approaching in his direction. It only took a moment for him to sense their cultivation bases, and every single one of them was in the upper half of Saint Soul realm.

Surprisingly, not a single one of them had a Saint Transformation realm cultivation base. Perhaps that was why most of them didn't know about the rules that bound the Saint Transformation realm cultivators in the secret realm.

The group that approached were 7 people, all young men and women, not a single person that looked older than late 20s. There was no doubt in Alex's mind that all of them were players.

Surprisingly, he recognized the person at the front. Well, he had to. There was no way of mistaking a girl with a golden fox mask on her face covering her beautiful features, her braided hair whipping in the wind, shining the many golden ornaments he had on her hair.

It was Ren Wujin, from the Ren Family, from Snowthorn Valley, of the Gold Kingdom.

Also known as The Golden Fox of the North.

Alex had talked to her once, back before the Trials had opened. She had been one of the queen candidates he had to meet. That had been the only time he had seen her.

They landed and everyone hesitated. Ren Wujin pulled out her golden mask, placing it to the side of her face. "Greetings, Your Majesty," she said in a placid tone.

"Greetings, Lady Ren." Alex looked at the others that were gathered there. Of the 3 men and 3 women, he recognized 3 more from when they fought him for pills. 2 were men, 1 woman. He had never seen the remaining 3 before this.

"Your Majesty," they greeted him as soon as recognized or found out who he was as well.

Alex greeted them back as well.

"Sister Hongxi, are you alright?" Ren Wujin asked Sarah, walking close to her. "We sensed something rather violent and had to rush here to check if you were alright. I know you made us stay back, but we couldn't when you could be—"

"I'm alright," Sarah answered, cutting off the girl from speaking too much. "They tried to disturb my breakthrough, or well my Leader did, but His Majesty protected me."

The others gasped, not because Alex had saved her, but because she had been attacked in the first place.

"What sort of monster attacks a person in the middle of a breakthrough," one of the girls with flowing light brown hair asked with unhidden fury in her words. "Sister Hongxi, you should report this to the army. They will definitely punish him."

"They would," Sarah mused before shaking her head. "No need for that. I will defeat him sooner or later, and then the battalion will be mine."

Alex could see the conviction in her face, hear it in those words. "Why do you want to be a Battalion leader so badly?" he couldn't help but ask her.

"I have my reasons," the girl said, not elaborating on it further. She turned to the group that had arrived and quickly said, "Let us return. My cultivation base still needs to stabilize and those people might just return."

The few people nodded and turned toward Alex, wondering. Sarah turned toward Alex as well.

"I'm sorry, Your Majesty," she said with a small bow. "I will have to leave now. We can talk properly when we meet once again."

With a nod, she flew away with the group, none giving him a second look.

Alex couldn't help but be slightly taken aback.

"Did they just leave me here alone?"

Chapter 1612: Freedom

"Why did I think they would welcome me to their hideout with smiling faces?" Alex thought as he walked away from the grassland where he stood. "Of course, they won't let me come with them. I'm someone from the other group. For all they know, we could've just put on a show for them."

Alex sighed as he was all alone once again, having to roam the island on his own.

He looked to the sky, the sun a little lower toward the west. "At least I don't have to worry about fighting for the next 20 or so hours," he thought, walking away.

Worry vanished from him like water on a hot rock. "I suppose this is the best way to go about it."

There was freedom with being alone that he had missed the past few months he was kept in the valley. He had made a lot of advancements in the valley, but being outside was equally as important for him.

Around the time night fell, thunder and lightning marred the sky and heavy rain poured all over the land. Alex found himself covered underneath a large tree where he set up his formations to begin his cultivation.

He cultivated the entire night and hours into the morning as well. He only stopped when he knew that the sun was high in the sky.

Done with cultivating for the day, Alex checked his cultivation base and smiled a little. "I knew I should have fought more," he thought. "It makes such a good difference for my cultivation speed. I should be able to break through in a month or two at this rate."

It was a bit too early in comparison to the times he had taken to break through before. Nearly a year off. It had only been a bit over 2 years since he last broke through, and Saint Soul realm made it harder to break through the higher he went.

But even that seemed to disappear due to the amount of training and cultivation he had managed to go through in the past year and a half.

'2 months might be a bit too early even at the rate I'm improving,' Alex thought. 'Especially if I stop fighting.'

He chewed on that thought for a few seconds.

Pearl and Whisker were standing around him too, both done with their cultivation, and watched him as he grew a weird little devious smile on his face.

"Brother? What's going on?" he asked with a worried expression.

"Hehe," Alex smiled, slowly standing up and stretched. "All this time, I've only ever been attacked. The times I challenged someone had usually been so I could get through my first battle of the day."

His spiritual sense suddenly exploded from him, searching all around him, even attacking formations to look through them.

"But now, that will no longer be true. I will be the one to attack others just because I can," he said.

Hundreds of kilometers around him, people sensed his spiritual sense and many even tried to follow it back to him, but few succeeded.

The ones that did wished they hadn't.

Alex noticed a broad-shouldered man with a heavy axe in his hand, walking up a mountain who immediately grimaced the moment he was locked on by the spiritual sense.

"Let's go," Alex said, taking Pearl and Whisker into their beast space and rushing off.

He arrived on the mountaintop a few minutes later and landed in front of the broad-shouldered man who had his axe held ready for an attack.

"Come on, let's fight," Alex said.

The reset was only less than an hour away, but Alex didn't care about the reset anymore. There was no point in waiting for it if he was going to be fighting night and day.

He had spent enough time inside the secret realm that he would care if he lost the next 30 days of battles in a row and was sent out of the secret realm.

As long as it got him close to a breakthrough, it would've done its job. Improving his sword at that time was just a luxury.

The man looked at Alex, gulping a bit in fear. He had been out here searching for people in groups to fight. The weaker ones would be around here somewhere, and he wanted to find them, so he could call members of his small group to attack them.

He calmed down, happy that he hadn't been challenged after the reset. As long as it was before, he was willing to agree. He had already fought, so why should he care?

"Let's fight," the man said.

Sword struck axe and sounds of metal clashing rang through the land. Alex used only Sword Qi and Intent to fight the man, but he put all of himself in those fights.

The man had a good cultivation base with Saint Soul 8th realm, but even then he felt pressed in that fight. He used different techniques and attacks, but Alex beat through everything, attacking him in close range.

As a result, he had to fight at close range as well.

They fought for nearly 10 minutes, neither party superior to the other one, and neither lost. However, the man clearly recognized that Alex was holding himself back.

Not only was he holding himself back, but he was also not using his Qi at all, which meant he could go on for as long as he had Qi. Alex could go for much longer certainly.

He fought to win quickly, but it was hard. Alex's Sword Qi was a little too strong to just beat at once.

Then the both of them sensed their talisman buzz. Alex smiled and suddenly Qi filled his sword and he slashed.

It was a simple slash, but the man could not block it at all.

'So strong!' was all he could think before the attack sent him flying down into the mountain where he lay in a small crater. It took him a few moments to get out of it.

When he did, Alex was standing next to him.

"The reset is here," he told the man. "Do you want to rest for a bit? Or should we get straight into our next fight?"

Chapter 1613: Silent Travel

"We should fly faster," Ren Wujin said as she and 3 others flew through the sky at what she considered was a rather slow pace.

"Can't," the only man of the 4 said. "I'm already doing all I can to hide ourselves from spiritual senses. If we move too fast, I won't be able to maintain it around us."

He held onto an artifact in his hand, a thick metal ring that seemed as if it was supposed to go around one's head like a band.

"Tsk!" one of the other two girls, someone with bright red hair, made a sound. "How much longer?"

"Should be 10 more minutes, 15 at most at this speed," the last girl with dark hair said. "Don't worry, we went there like this the other day too. We will be there soon enough."

"I'm scared," the red-haired girl said. "He comes out of nowhere and we can do nothing about it."

Nobody said anything.

They continued flying for over 10 minutes and arrived at a small gathering of people that they had found a few weeks ago. They would have to work harder and maybe even change their base if they wanted to find new groups of people.

They walked into a formation and finally, the man among them could drop the barrier he had been keeping up the entire time.

"Alright, we can finally—"

The red-haired girl who was about to speak stopped halfway through when she saw four other people who entered the same as them. It didn't take even a second for all 8 of them to know that they were all there for the same reason.

"It's him!" the dark-haired girl pointed to a figure amongst the group of 4.

It was an old man with a cultivation base of Saint Transformation 1st realm.

"Yang Baijin," Ren Wujin said in a low voice. By now, she knew every member of the opposite group led by Zhao Boqin. This was one of the 4 strongest people in their group.

And their group had none that were stronger.

"What do we do?" the young man with her asked through spiritual sense.

"Do not say anything or reject if you're challenged," Ren Wujin said. "Let me take the lead."

The two girls next to her nodded.

"Did you just find them, old Yang?" Ren Wujin asked the man. Her eyes drifted to the 2 men and the last woman by his side, but her focus was on the man.

None of the other two were Saint Transformation realm. Not that it mattered with one of them just that. He could win against them all if he got the way. Her first thought was running, but maybe there was a greater way.

"Fairy Ren," the old man said in a sweet voice. "How lucky of us to finally find these people. We have been searching for one since our other one seemed close to having to leave."

He gestured to the 15 or so people that were gathered there, the highest of which was still weaker than their weakest.

Ren Wujin thought for a bit, her mind moving through diplomatic words that her father had taught her. "If you want one, I will be happy to let you have them," she said. "Please make your choice."

She pointed to the 15 people gathered in that group too. Not a single one of them said anything. It wasn't their place to speak. Just the fact that they had survived 20 months in the secret realm was enough for them. Not that they could say anything even if they wanted to.

The ones that preyed on their Losses were just too strong. They stayed there listlessly, looking toward the young man in the corner whose turn it was to accept the challenge that day.

The old man looked toward the group that sat on the uneven ground and back toward Ren Wujin. "I'm not sure," he said. "I would very much like to gain more points if I can."

Ren Wujin frowned. Did she really have to do it? Could she do nothing else? It didn't seem she had a choice.

"If you want to fight, I will give you a fight," the girl said. She took a deep breath and at the same time, the barrier disappeared.

It was sudden and everyone but Ren Wujin, and the group's leader was surprised. It was her orders and the group's leader was the one that had stopped the barrier from working.

"What are you doing?" the old man asked in a frown.

Ren Wujin simply smiled, and then her cultivation base flared with a strong aura that forced her comrades to move away from her.

"Sister Ren?" the red-haired girl called out. "What are you doing?"

"What are you doing, child?" the old man asked. "If you want to fight me, just challenge—"

He stopped.

"No!" his head whipped to the right as he sensed something.

"NO!" he cried out even more and turned to run, but it was too late.

Alex was coming for them.

Alex had been searching for people to challenge, but it was difficult to find someone to challenge all throughout the day. Because of what he had started doing 2 months ago, it had become difficult to find people now.

They were extra cautious. It seemed someone was not so cautious anymore.

The moment he sensed someone's cultivation base, he left at his quickest speed. He could already sense people running away. He kept track of where everyone went, but his target was just one fellow.

A person who could not believe that Alex could catch up to him.

Alex arrived within range of the man and immediately challenged him. "Senior Yang, let's fight!"

The old man, even as he ran away, sensed his talisman buzzing once and then again as the challenge was accepted on its own.

He stopped and turned around.

"Your Majesty!" the old man said slowly. "Surely you don't want to fight me. I am but an old man—"

"You already accepted," Alex cut him off. "Let us fight and be done with it."

The man didn't know what to say. He had fought Alex before, but each time he had won. However, recently he had started hearing that Alex was much stronger than what he led on to be.

After what he did to Zhao Boqin, the man didn't doubt.

"Your Majesty, I will give—"

"If you give up, I will hunt you day and night until you have 5 Out of Bounds and can no longer remain in this secret realm," Alex said. "Don't think you can run away from me by giving up."

The man gulped. He thought for a bit and nodded. "Fine, if these old bones can give you a fight, then I will do so," he said and brought out a few things.

To Alex's surprise, 3 puppets flew out of the man's storage bag. Each puppet was of a different shape and size. One was thin with a feminine body and held a sword. Another held a shield on its left hand and had a rather large body.

and the last was a puppet in armor that seemed to have rather well-defined features.

"Interesting," Alex said. "Why don't I do the same?"

And then he brought out his puppet.

Chapter 1614: Puppet Battle

Alex took off the artifact that he always had his puppet wear before bringing it out.

The old man gave a surprised look when he saw the puppet as he hadn't heard from anyone that Alex even used a puppet.

"Aren't you going to use swords?" the man asked him carefully.

"Yes, but I've been using swords day and night," Alex said. "It's fun to use something else from time to time. A bit of spice to my days."

He also wanted to check how his control of the puppet was and how it fared against someone who seemed to use the puppet daily. It would certainly not be an easy fight, but he couldn't see himself losing.

Alex had to use his Qi to manipulate the puppet. It was a normal puppet with no skill or technique carved into it. It didn't even have a sliver of his spirit inside of it, like how most puppets seemed to have.

In his case, he had only refined it. The puppet was his, but he couldn't control it as easily.

He looked at the 3 puppets that belonged to the old man and wanted to learn more about how it was made. He had been to the Royal School of Puppets for some time too and knew how puppets were made.

He couldn't help but wonder how good the materials used for this puppet were. He wondered if he should do it much damage. He was also curious about the artifacts the puppets carried, but none more than the puppets themselves.

He moved back, letting his simple puppet stand before him. 'I should get whisker to fight with it someday,' he thought. 'He needs a chance to battle too.'

But the thought didn't last for long as the old man charged without warning.

The thin puppet moved at once, its speed rather frightening, and arrived in front of Alex's puppet. The thin puppet swung its sword, but Alex managed to see through the attack and pulled back his puppet in time.

He made it to punch the small puppet on the side, but the muscular puppet came from the side, slamming into Alex's puppet. Alex made his puppet punch that puppet instead, but a rather golden shield blocked it from touching it.

'Should I put more force into the attacks?' he thought. He could beat it at once if he did so, but he wasn't sure if that was the right choice. That was certainly not a very good choice if he wanted to test out his puppet more thoroughly in this fight.

And hopefully, learn a few things about controlling puppets.

He punched the muscular puppet a few more times, and on one of the strikes, it took the force of the punch and moved backward. At the same time, the lean puppet from before charged in with its sword ready to strike through Alex's puppet's chest.

Alex barely managed to move the puppet to the right at the last moment and the sword passed where the puppet should've been. He noticed the muscular puppet incoming and was about to strike, but instead, he had to dodge the attack as a spear went through where the puppet should've been.

The bigger puppet's shield had disappeared and in its stead, a spear had appeared in its hand. Alex hadn't noticed that amid the battle at all, and only noticed it when it moved to attack.

'I should pay more attention,' he thought.

The lean and thin puppet seemed to be the fastest of the three as it darted after the spear and caught it before throwing it back at Alex's puppet.

Alex smiled.

His puppet suddenly twisted and grabbed the muscular puppet before tossing it to the side. Then, with another unnatural twist of its body, it caught the incoming spear right before it landed on it.

The spear passed under the puppet's armpit before stopping.

Alex made it turn around and held the spear properly. He didn't know how to use a spear at all. Spear was one of the weapons he never cared to try, but he had seen enough people fighting with it to know what he could and could not do with it.

'Defend with the shaft, and stick the pointy end into the opponent,' Alex thought. That was all he needed to know anyway.

The old man frowned. He couldn't believe that Alex's puppet could use his artifact. After all, the spear was refined by him and would only work for him. But never had he imagined that Alex intended to use the spear not as an artifact, but as a simple weapon.

He was going to use the spear for a spear, and nothing else.

His puppet charged without warning as well, dashing toward the muscular puppet. The fat puppet arrived before it, a shield ready in its hand. Alex had seen it appear this time around. There was a spatial pocket inside the puppets, like an attached storage bag.

'That's something,' Alex thought.

His puppet moved fast, arriving in front of the muscular one and stabbing forward, but the muscular puppet's armor came into work, creating a barrier that protected itself. Alex's attack made no more impact with a spear than it did with a fist.

But that didn't matter. It was only a distraction in the first place.

The puppet took off one of its hands and moved to the left, suddenly grabbing onto the sword that was swung toward it.

'Got you!' Alex thought and pulled back the spear to stab the lean puppet. The puppet tried to move away, but it didn't let go of the sword. The old man had only told the puppet to move backward and didn't command it to let go of its sword.

By the time he realized his fault, it was too late.

The spear struck the lean puppet in the chest, sending it flying backward while Alex's puppet held onto the sword. He flipped the sword and caught it by the handle this time around. There was no mark where the puppet had caught the blade at all, not even a scratch.

With a spear in one hand and a sword in another, Alex sent his puppet charging into the other two puppets.

They tried to fight back, but the old man's offensive puppet had already been dealt with, so he could only send the other two into becoming defensive. The fight lasted long just because of that and it took 10 more minutes before the fat puppet with the shield lost, and 10 minutes after that, so did the muscular puppet.

Once all 3 puppets were defeated, Alex threw both the spear and sword toward the old man and waited to accept his concede.

The man didn't wait a minute longer before giving up.

Alex smiled and nodded. "Now go along," he said as he took back his puppet. "I will see you again soon, hopefully."

The old man prayed not.

Alex turned around and looked in a certain direction. Despite the battle here, he had kept a vague attention in all directions, and this one was the one he kept his main focus on.

One of the men that came with the old man had run off in that direction and disappeared.

'So that's where you have all been hiding,' Alex thought. 'Good to know.'

Chapter 1615: Against the Golden Fox

Alex found Ren Wujin not far away, trying to come back to the group of weaker cultivators, probably trying to get done with her first battle of the day.

He could sense her sensing him, but that didn't stop him from flying toward her. Ren Wujin thought of flying away, but on second thought, she stood her ground.

Alex arrived there a moment later and landed in front of her and the group of 15 cultivators. He was about to challenge her when he realized that she had been waiting for him to.

'She's waiting to reject me,' Alex thought. That was certainly the only reason from what he could see.

He wondered what choice he had here. If he just challenged, she would reject and that would be it for the day. But if he didn't then there was no point in him being here.

The girl gave a slanted smile understanding Alex's predicament. He thought for a bit and nodded as he concluded.

"If I let you get done with your first match, will you fight me afterward?" he asked.

The girl frowned a bit. "You will give me that opportunity?" she asked him.

Alex nodded. That was his best choice here from what he could see.

"What if I don't agree to this?" she asked. "Can you stop me from leaving?"

"No," Alex said truthfully. "But I will follow you until you fight me. Or you can lead me straight to your headquarters if you want to."

Alex didn't want to fight Sarah or Zhao Boqin just yet. They had Immortal Qi and fighting those became a bit too difficult. He did want to do that as soon as he broke through, however. He was so close to it.

The girl nodded.

"Fine, I will accept Your Majesty's offer," the girl said. "Please don't go back on it though."

"I won't," Alex said as he stepped back a little to make way for the girl to fight.

It didn't take more than a few minutes for Ren Wujin to fight the man that had been selected to fight today before coming back to Alex.

The two of them flew away from the group of people where they could fight freely.

"If you are ready, we can start, Your Majesty," the girl said. "I wish to make it quick."

"I don't," Alex said, bringing out a sword. "Let's fight."

Ren Wujin nodded in acceptance. This was going to be the first time was going to fight this girl. He wondered how good she was.

Her sword appeared in her hand. A crystalline sword with gold embedded throughout the hilt and a large ruby for the pommel. It wasn't a regular sword by any measure, but it was hard to tell if it was a treasure that could have been handed to her as her first treasure.

Alex had a suspicion that the treasure she had received after coming here was the golden fox mask that now lay on her face.

'Alright then. Let us see why the Ren family would ever want to adopt you as their daughter.'

The girl stabbed her sword, sending a blade-shaped fire attack toward Alex.

Alex, powered with only Sword Qi and Sword Intent, swung at the incoming attack. Since the girl wasn't even a Saint Soul 9th realm cultivator right now, he felt no need to fight her with anything else.

However, when the attack landed on Alex, confidence vanished from him at once as confusion and panic filled him for an instant before he controlled himself.

"That was..." he spoke slowly, mulling over what he wanted to say. "Strong."

The girl said nothing.

He looked at her, giving a knowing look. "It's close," he told her. "But if you fought a capable Saint Transformation 1st realm cultivator, like old Yang from earlier, you would've definitely lost."

The girl frowned silently before nodding. She knew she would lose, that was why she had even dared to grab his attention. Why else would she do something as stupid as shutting down the barrier that hid her and then flaring up her cultivation base?

Her sword flashed again, sending out a strong Fire slash once again. This time, Alex swung too, sending out everything he had to block her.

His Sword Intent and Sword Qi had gotten stronger, but they weren't yet strong enough to fight someone on the precipice of touching the Saint Transformation realm. But he was close to getting them there. Just a month or two more and they would be right there.

Midnight flashed this time, the black blade making a white blur in the air as Sword Qi flew out of Alex's sword, flying toward the girl.

Ren Wujin took back her sword and instead moved her left arm. An amber gem attached to some sort of golden bangles on her left arm flashed, creating a barrier in front of her like a curved shield.

Alex showed a hint of surprise at how sturdy the barrier was as it could hold against his attack. That was surprising.

Another attack flew toward him, quickly transforming into a beautiful bright red image of a wolf.

Alex took no time to send out an attack to destroy it as well. Then, he sent out the next attack.

The two of them fought for a while, throwing out attacks and defending against ones coming for them. Alex didn't think much of it, only recognizing that she most likely had Wood, Fire, and Metal spiritual roots, and liked using Fire the most.

However, after a while, the attacks started getting stronger and stronger. Slowly, it was touching on the precipice of Saint Transformation 1st realm. It might as well be strong enough to battle someone in the Saint Transformation 1st realm with a weaker foundation.

'Oh!' Alex thought when he realized what was causing it. 'She's using Sword Intent. Was she hiding it all this time?'

Alex couldn't see what Ren Wujin looked like at the moment, her face was hidden by the golden mask she wore.

The attacks got increasingly difficult to handle as Alex fought. Her power alone was the same as him without using Qi, but once she revealed it fully, it was stronger. Alex was slowly being pushed back.

The girl looked at him in surprise, but a cold wave of energy got rid of her surprise immediately. She had to rid herself of useless emotions as there was no need for them in this battle.

'Maybe I can win this,' she thought. Whether she could or not, she did not know. But if she gave it her all, then maybe she could.

She moved, her body moving at a sudden speed, like a fox going for a hunt.

Alex tracked her with his eyes and threw out an attack when he saw the slash coming from her direction. He sent out a few more attacks, all of which flew close by her, without ever managing to hit her.

'This is fun,' Alex thought.

He got into another battle where he threw out his attacks as quickly as he could, while Ren Wujin tried to catch him off guard from all directions. But Alex was simply too good at following movement.

His Demon Eyes were just too good for that.

She stopped at the end after dodging one final attack and decided it was time to end the match if she could. Her sword gave a small buzz as the sword glowed in two colors, Red and Green.

The energy mixed together but remained separate for the most part. But Alex had a feeling he could see the red color get brighter.

'Wood-Fire empowerment,' Alex thought. 'In a technique at that?'

He had seen people empower their attacks using energy from other spiritual roots, but this was the first time he had seen an attack where the two energies worked in tandem.

Ren Wujin wasted no time and swung.

The red and green energy quickly turned to an undulating arrow with no uniform shape or size. It flew across the sky, going straight for him. Even at the distance, Alex could tell the arrow was too strong for him without his Qi.

But he felt stubborn, just a little. 'I'll be fine,' he thought, and his sword blossomed into a bright white light that sent off Sword Qi flying in all directions.

Sword Aura enveloped him and the sword, and then he swung.

It was a simple slash that flew toward the simple arrow that came toward him. There were no fancy techniques, no fancy shapes. Just raw power in those attacks.

And then the two clashed.

Ren Wujin felt her heart skip a beat when she saw the Sword Aura for the first time, and then she felt her heart skip another beat when the shockwave of the two attacks clashing went past her.

The bright red and green attack struggled against the Sword Aura and was seemingly strong enough to destroy it. However, no matter how weaker the Sword Aura felt, it didn't budge an inch.

Step after step, it tore through her attack, sending her into disbelief. As she watched, the attack successfully broke past her technique and arrived for her.

She raised her hand to create a barrier, but her skin went numb when she sensed Alex behind her.

Before she could turn around, he struck her in the back, sending her flying into the sword aura in front, where she got hit once more.

After being hit one after another by the two attacks, Ren Wujin felt her mind grow numb, and then darkness took over her mind.

Chapter 1616: Breakthrough

Alex sat by the small hill where Ren Wujin lay unconscious for a while, thinking of how much longer he would need to break through. He was close, he could tell that much.

If he could continuously breakthrough for the next 10 days or so, he was sure he would be ready to break through. Maybe even less. He would have to start cultivating to be certain.

He just wasn't willing to give away 10 days when he could spend them fighting instead. That would bring back the same result. Surely going out to fight was the better option here.

'Just a little longer,' he thought. Once he broke through, he would have less qualms about going out to fight the likes of Sarah and Zhao Boqin. He wouldn't be at their level yet, but he would be close enough.

He saw the girl stir from the corner of his vision and looked over.

Ren Wujin slowly got back up, looking around for a moment, her eyes landing on Alex. Instantly, all memories of what had happened flooded back and she quickly checked herself to see if she was okay.

There were marks on her clothes, some small cuts here and there, some scratches. But aside from that, everything else was in order. She was more than fine.

She couldn't even feel any pain despite falling unconscious.

"Did you feed me a pill?" she asked.

"You seemed hurt," Alex said.

The girl nodded silently, checking herself more thoroughly. She quickly got up. "Thank you," she said. "You won't follow where I go, right?"

"Go," Alex said. "I won't follow."

The girl nodded and flew away without another word.

Alex stayed there without looking where the girl went to. No doubt she would do her best to hide from him after reaching further away and then go through countless troubles to make sure he couldn't find out where she had gone even if he was actively searching.

"I've rested enough," he thought. "Time to go search for more."

Alex barely took a break for the next week or so. If he ever did, it was because he couldn't find anyone to challenge.

To begin with, it was hard to find someone to challenge. Everyone he went to

Usually rejected him. It was only around the hours before the reset that he found people willing to fight him.

Finding people was hard, but once he did, he fought them as well as he could without immediately defeating them. Only that was getting harder and harder too, as the people he fought were usually very weak for him.

His Sword Intent alone had reached a level that only a few dozen people in the entire secret realm could fight him, and they were mostly hiding themselves in two groups.

Once he felt that he had fought enough, it was time for him to break through.

He found a place by a tall tree that still stood while the others around it were destroyed. He stayed close to the tree in its shade and brought out a few things in preparation.

Pearl and Whisker came out, and after them the puppet that sat to the side. A few formation plates came out which he quickly activated, forming a few different barriers that spanned hundreds of meters.

Finally, he placed a book by his left side and his sword by the right. "I'll begin cultivating," Alex said to his two beasts. "If a problem comes up, handle it."

The two beasts looked around and nodded.

The sky grew darker as Alex began cultivating, rain clouds gathering overhead. The wind picked up, replacing the hot wind around them with the cool breeze from the sky. The wind slowly picked up and it started raining.

By the time it was raining, Alex was already deep in cultivation, working toward his breakthrough.

Pearl sat quietly on the ground, ignoring the rain that battered him outside. He could easily not get wet, but he didn't bother with such nonsense.

Whisker, on the other hand, quickly made the Immortal puppet grab him and keep him away from the rain. He stayed in the Puppet's embrace for as long as it would rain.

A few minutes later, Pearl could sense Alex slowly drifting toward breakthrough. The sky had started stirring enough for him to tell. Anyone who saw that would know that someone was either breaking through or learning a dao.

A sudden bang took Pearl's attention from Alex, forcing him to look in the direction of the sound. Whisker poked his head out of the puppet's embrace to look in the direction of the sound as well.

"What's happening?" Whisker asked fearfully. Unconsciously, he made the puppet hold him even more firmly.

"I don't know," Pearl said. "I can take a look, but they will sense my spiritual sense. Should I check outside?"

Whisker thought for a bit and shook his head. "Don't let them know we are here," he said. "We need to keep hiding for the time being."

They looked back toward Alex. He was deep enough in cultivation that it didn't seem like he had time to spare them some thought. But a feeling of reassurance did come through their bond, and that was enough for both of the beasts.

"Let's see what happens," Pearl said. "They might just leave after a while."

"Hopefully," Whisker said. "We should've set up better formations, with formation flags. Formation plates are just not good enough."

Pearl nodded, but only because Whisker had said so. He didn't know enough about the differences between plates and flags to tell why one was better than the other, except for the fact that flags could be set further apart.

"If they continue, they will break through the formation soon enough," Whisker said. "The formation plates just don't hold enough spirit stones to last very long. Brother, hurry up."

And yet the feeling of reassurance continued flowing into them through their bonds.

The first barrier broke open and people spilled in. The barrier that stopped their entry was the only thing keeping them out. As soon as that was destroyed, they had nothing else barring their entry.

3 men and 2 women arrived inside, all flaring with cultivation bases in the Saint Transformation realm. Immediately, Pearl and Whisker panicked.

They had not imagined that the people who entered would be that strong.

All 5 people stared at Pearl and his black fur first. Then it went to the puppet, not even noticing the tiny eyes that watched them through a sliver in the puppet's clutched hands.

Finally, their eyes landed on Alex, the sword that stuck to his right, and the book that lay beside him on his left.

"Ah! So it IS him," the taller of the girls with a blue ribbon in her hair said. She looked back at a tanned man who was their leader. "Are you sure that we should do this, brother Shin?"

"He's been troubling us enough," the leader named Shin said. "There's hardly any hunting ground anymore and he's found us more times than anyone in the last few months."

"He's right," another man with his hair in a bun said. "We kept ourselves from the fight between those two, but because of him, we're having a hard time finding people to not get a Loss. Everyone keeps running away to a different place once they know he's found them."

"What do you two think?" the man asked the last remaining man and woman.

The woman just grunted, making it apparent that she would go with whichever choice they ended up with in the end.

The final man was younger than everyone, but his eyes were looking for a battle. He had to fight Alex a few weeks ago and had since then thought that Alex had only won because he had used some underhanded technique. He wanted some revenge.

His agreement was written right on the face.

The girl with the blue ribbon who started questioning simply sighed. "I still think it isn't right," she said. "But you guys act like you know better than me, so go on."

The man that was the leader took a step forward, his cultivation base sending terror through Whisker and Pearl, despite the steady stream of reassurance that came from Alex.

Neither of the two could understand what it was that made Alex be so reassured that nothing bad was going to happen. The man that stood before them had a cultivation base of Saint Transformation 3rd realm after all.

"I have come before you to challenge you to a duel," the man spoke, his booming voice echoing through the empty thicket of trees.

Pearl was about to say something when he suddenly heard Alex's voice.

"You 5 are players, aren't you?" Alex asked. His speaking in the middle of his own breakthrough surprised them all quite a bit.

The man looked at Alex directly, but there was no sign of his breakthrough faltering at all. 'Such amazing focus,' he thought. It took effort to put one's focus on two things at once.

"We are," the man said. "Is it that easy to tell?"

"I always wondered why the group of players only had a single Saint Transformation realm cultivator," Alex said. "When I fought three of you during the past few months, I was certain there was another group, but you made it hard to find you."

"You made it hard for us to find others too," the man said before chuckling a little. "Yes, we are players, but that doesn't mean we're much different from regular cultivators. If you think that will make us step back, then you're wrong."

A small grin appeared on Alex's otherwise emotionless face. "The chances were little, but I had hoped someone would bite the bait," he said. "Yes, I accept your challenge."

Chapter 1617: Terror

All 7 of the individuals standing in front of Alex looked wary. The 5 that came to attack were one thing, but even Pearl and Whisker felt wary for some reason. They didn't understand what was going on.

"Bait?" the young man with the scornful look asked from the back where he was staying with the others.

The leader said nothing, quietly making sure that the breakthrough that was happening was Alex's. He could feel the roiling energy in the sky that everyone called the heavens. There was no doubt that he was in the middle of a breakthrough.

If he wasn't wrong about what he sensed, then it was even correct to say that the person in front of him had only begun breaking through. So he couldn't understand why it was that he chose to accept the challenge just yet.

The girls looked warily on all sides. "He's joking. There's nothing here waiting to jump on us," the one with the blue ribbons said. The quiet one slowly nodded.

"I think he means himself," the man with his hair in a bun said. "Are you going to attack us yourself, Your Majesty?"

Alex spoke, but the words weren't for the men. "Pearl, step back," he said.

"Brother, but—"

"It's alright," Alex said. "Besides, you were never supposed to be the one doing the fighting here."

Alex didn't open his eyes the entire time, but Whisker thought it was him that his gaze was drifting toward.

"Whisker, I am allowing you to use all you can in this fight," Alex said. "You know what to do."

Whisker did, and he hated it.

He didn't want to fight. He knew how much of a coward he was when it came to directly fighting. For someone who couldn't die, he wasn't sure why he hated conflict so much.

Still, as he felt the wave of reassurance that had flowed until now from Alex disappear, he knew he had to step forward. The aura in the sky had suddenly grown stronger and everyone could tell that Alex had started focusing on his cultivation even harder.

A final wave of command came from Alex, both to Pearl and Whisker.

"Whatever you do, don't let them leave with our secrets."

Pearl nodded and stepped back, going next to Alex so he could protect him when needed. The puppet walked back too and Whisker relinquished all control over it.

"Use the puppet to take care of brother," Whisker said before standing in the midst of the battle. He could hear his tiny heart beating loudly in his eardrums, staring at the people who could squash him with a sneeze.

The five players were quite confused as well. The leader especially was the most confused. The challenge had been accepted and the fight was underway, but Alex wasn't fighting him. Was he supposed to fight a rat?

He looked at Whisker and found it hard to believe a rat like that could have a Saint Realm cultivation base, but even then it was just a rat. On top of that, it was so weak that he could beat it at once.

"Get it over with already," the girl with blue ribbons said. "We need to leave soon."

The man shrugged. "Fine, I will—"

He lost his thought process when he saw what was happening in front of him.

A book that was next to Alex floated right in front of Whisker and suddenly brightened in a crimson glow. It opened, its pages flipping slowly and then the glow got brighter.

Flashes of red streaked his vision as things appeared around him. Each thing that appeared gave an aura of something that scared him. What scared him most was that there were more than just a few of them.

The man watched in horror as an assortment of crimson beasts filled the area around him, each one stronger than the next. What scared him the most was that the beasts that surrounded him were all in the upper Saint Soul realm, with quite a few even being in the Saint Transformation realm.

He could sense 3 that were in Saint Transformation 3rd realm, the same cultivation base as him.

Blood drained from his face in terror. He could not understand just how something like this could ever exist. How could beasts that weren't beasts be so strong?

The Blood Beasts from the Blood God's Manual were normally strong, but over the past few years that Alex had spent cultivating, the improvement in his own blood aura thanks to his cultivation base had made it so that the beasts were also stronger than normal.

Alex had reached Saint Transformation 3rd realm in terms of Blood Aura back when he had left the Beast Paradise. Now, over 12 years later, after going from Saint Core 7th realm to Saint Soul 3rd realm, his blood aura had improved to nearly Saint Transformation 5th realm.

Nearly.

Whisker felt a connection to Alex and through that connection, he felt the connection to all the beasts around him. Each and every one of them remained there, waiting for him to give them a command.

And he gave the command.

The silent command flowed through only 10 of the beasts, no more. But each one of the beasts was in the Saint Transformation realm. And as soon as they came together, they formed a small array, that immediately improved the aura of each beast that stood there.

Hell Emperor's Divine Battle Array was quite the array formation.

Terror spread through the five as they couldn't understand how the strong beasts got stronger. Neither did they realize when the first one attacked.

A giant eagle with crimson wings unfurled threw out its feathers of blood at the man. Blood splattered all over the man and around him, battering him with something he was too late to stop.

The other four thought of interfering in the fight, but other beasts around them made them scared to even think of doing so.

The man barely managed to put up a defense when a blood monkey appeared next to him, punching him in the face.

Moving the defense around, the man looked behind him at something else that came for him, but the slam from the monkey shattered his defense in just that one strike.

The man wanted to look back, but the snake in front of him stopped him from doing so. In the end, he was beaten by two beasts before more joined in.

The man tried to fight back, but none of the attacks did anything to most of them, and the three beasts that were stronger than him continued beating him until his talisman buzzed.

The man had lost so pathetically that he didn't even know what to do. And yet, the attacks didn't stop.

"I lost! Stop! I lost already!" he shouted a few times before the attacks halted and he had time to breathe. "Don't hit me, I lost."

Whisker looked at the man confusedly. The match was a little too fast and he had won so easily. He didn't know what to do now.

But Pearl did.

Pearl walked forward, his eyes seeing the man with his hair in a bun. "You were the first to agree with fighting my brother, were you not?"

The young man felt his stomach sink.

"Come and fight us," Pearl said, and the young man didn't even have the right to refuse.

Chapter 1618: Punishment

3 of the five thought they could get out of being challenged by quickly getting done with their own battles, but to their surprise, Pearl challenged each one of them after the other battles were done.

They tried escaping from the place, but with beasts all around, they couldn't even find an escape route. With the formations blocking all but the people from coming in, there was nothing that the people could do that could save them.

Even their spiritual sense was being blocked from going out.

The silent girl and the final young man did their best to fight against Whisker and the beasts, but there was nothing they could do that could win the fight. Even the use of a Fire Dao did nothing to stop the beasts from beating them.

By the end of it, they were all scared and huddled up together to find a path to escape, but with nearly a hundred beasts surrounding them, that was nearly impossible.

"Let us leave!" one of them shouted at Whisker.

Whisker said nothing and remained behind the blood snake.

"Vow to not tell anyone what you saw or heard today," Pearl said. "Not even talk about it amongst yourselves."

"What? What do you mean?" one of the girls asked.

"You wanted to leave right? Then vow," Pearl said. "Otherwise you will remain here until my brother is done sending every single one of you out of this secret realm."

They all felt concerned. They were so close to the end of the secret realm, that they couldn't stop now. They needed all the points they could get to get into the competition that was going to take place soon.

Reluctantly, they made the oath. Pearl waited until he felt the oath fulfilled and nodded. He couldn't see any loopholes in the oath he made, so he saw no problem anymore.

The 5 of them felt the oath take hold of them as well and felt bad about it. A few of them looked at the beasts that still surrounded them and couldn't help but be surprised that they all belonged to Alex.

It was no different from walking around with an army. If only they knew that Whisker had only brought out as many as he did because there wasn't much place to bring out more.

"Put them away," the silent girl spoke while everyone else was gazing around. "Let us go."

"Not yet," Pearl said.

The five of them frowned. "We already made the oath. Do you not trust us?" the leader asked.

"About the oath? I do," Pearl said. "But you will still have to wait."

"You said that you would let us go if we made the oath," the girl with blue ribbons said. "You said we could leave."

"I did," Pearl said. "But not when."

Everyone felt their face drain. "You bastard!" one of them said in a low voice. Pearl couldn't even tell which one of the 5 it was that spoke.

"You should have made sure I could be trusted before you trusted me," Pearl said. He was feeling quite good about everything, especially when he saw the 5 of them grimace at his words.

He didn't think any of the 5 deserved any sort of freedom after what they had done. If it was a regular clash, Pearl would have had no animosity with any of them. However, they had decided to attack his brother while he was in the middle of a breakthrough.

That was a sort of thing that if it was up to him, he would cripple or even kill them for it. But he didn't want to be making those decisions now.

"You'll wait until my brother is done with his breakthrough," Pearl said. "Then he will give out the punishment you deserve."

The five of them could only hold a sullen look as the blood beast surrounded them with no path of escape.

"Just hold on," the leader said in a soft voice. "Don't do anything rash."

Everyone nodded and waited. No one wanted to do something that could get them killed.

They didn't have to wait for long. Alex's breakthrough went smoothly and he was done with it by the time morning came around. He had even taken the time to stabilize his cultivation base before opening them to look at what was happening around him.

He smiled.

"Good job, Whisker. You too, Pearl," he said as he stood up from where he sat and pulled Midnight from the ground before walking up front.

All five of the players quickly got up in a panic, watching Alex walk toward them.

Alex rubbed Pearl before taking Whisker to his shoulder and walked to the front. The Blood God's Manual floated to his hand as well and he held it open, bringing all but a select few beasts back into the book. Just enough remained outside that the people could still not leave.

"You came to ruin my cultivation base and I find it hard to forgive someone for that. I saved someone from the same happening to them a few months ago, and to think it would happen to me too," Alex said. "I was hoping no one would come, but you did, and now you deserve punishment for it. What should I do to you?"

"Your Majesty, we're sorry," the girl with the blue ribbons said. "We were wrong>"

"We're sorry."

"Please forgive us."

"Please have mercy on us."

The other 4 practically fell to his feet the moment he gave them a chance to speak.

Alex looked at them, a disgusted look on his face. He shook his head for a second and spoke. "The mercy you'll see from me is that you won't be crippled. My forgiveness for the fact that you aren't dead. But you will be punished and you will serve it."

"Whatever you say, Your Majesty," the leader said quickly.

Alex thought for a bit. "You will give me 50 wins for my first battle over the course of the next 50 days, each day," he said. "You will make an oath of it."

Chapter 1619: Close to the End

Alex was done fighting Gyuyin, the young Saint Transformation 1st realm player who was the last person to be done with challenging him.

The other 2 men and women had left him alone, running away now that they were done with their oath. Now that Gyuyin was done as well, there was no more oath for him to keep.

"I'm leaving," he said, before quickly turning around to run away. He did not want to remain here with Alex one moment longer.

"Wait!" Alex's words halted his steps and he turned around with a grim expression on his face.

"Our oath is done, I will no—"

"Not that," Alex quickly said. "Do you know how long we've remained here? How many days still remain?"

Alex had tried to remember, but he couldn't tell much. He had fought day and night for so long that the battles he fought blended together in his head and would take some time for him to sort through them.

He had hoped the Voidsand Hourglass would tell him how long of a time had passed, but it wasn't capable of telling the exact time, only how many days or hours had passed. If he wanted to know the exact time through it, he would have to have checked the time at the start.

He remembered checking the time sometime before he entered and sometime after. From what he knew, there was no more than a month remaining still. He simply hoped to get a more accurate answer.

The young man gave a thoughtful look and said, "I'm not sure about the exact days that have passed. I haven't kept track of time like the others have, but I'm sure we still have about 10 to 15 days here."

Alex nodded. That was around the same time he thought too.

"I see. You can go now," Alex said. "But starting tomorrow, I will fight you if I find you. Make sure to hide well if you want to stay out of my way."

The young man didn't give a hint of a nod before he ran away.

Alex sighed and went back inside the formation that was running to the side. Inside it was the tree under which he had cultivated back then. The large tree still stood tall, unfettered by the fighting of the Saints, giving shade to anyone who sat beneath it.

Pearl and Whisker were fighting close by. Pearl was alone, and Whisker was controlling either the puppet or one of the blood beasts. Sometimes both.

The two stopped fighting when Alex walked in, and Whisker watched the blood beast disappear into the book Alex had now held in his hands.

"Are you done with them?" Pearl said.

"Done. All 50 days," Alex said. "We have half a month remaining in this secret realm. It sounds short, but it's long enough to fight a few more people."

Alex knew he could do nothing and he would still last until the end of the secret realm. He felt a bit weird about it all. He hadn't remained in a place like this for such a long time.

The last time he had remained somewhere for 2 years or more was back when Shen Jing, or rather Bai Jingshen had helped him train in the eastern greenscape of the Western Continent.

There had been a time when he had spent 3 years in a secret realm, but for him, only 13 days had passed, so he didn't truly count that.

The Sundering Sanctum was around 8 months, and most other secret realms only held him for a month or two. This was certainly the longest he had remained inside a secret realm.

And from what he had heard, the final secret realm of the Eastern Continent, the Harmonious Balance Haven could last even longer. Not that he knew a lot about that one either.

"Are you done with your training then?" Pearl asked.

"Done with my training..." Alex mused for a bit, thinking if he had or not. His Sword Intent had become strong enough during the past 50 days when he pushed the 5 cultivators hard, and along with it, so had Sword Qi and Sword Aura.

"I think I'm done with training," Alex said. "I had hoped to see the next level of the Sword, but I don't think I'm ready yet. I wonder what is missing."

He had asked that question to Godslayer before, but Godslayer's answer has been simple.

Complete your technique and embrace it.

Alex had completed his technique, or the base form of it at least. He had created a template of sorts that could be used on its own, but he could also twist the technique a little if need be.

'I have perfected the base technique, haven't I?' he thought. Maybe the fact that he was even questioning it meant that he wasn't done with it. Or maybe he had, and now he just had to 'embrace it.' Whatever that meant.

"I'm sure I'll get there someday soon," Alex said. "It surely can't be much further away."

Alex made up a mind of doing nothing but practicing his technique for the next week. Practice it until his arm wanted to drop off and run away, or until his mind no longer wanted to think straight.

"You two should get back in," Alex said to the two beasts. "Next time you're out, we'll be out of the secret realm."

The two beasts nodded and went away quietly into their respective beast spaces. Once they were gone, Alex moved over to a place where people would find it hard to find them and set up a small formation where he could practice without stopping.

The technique he had created, the one he still couldn't give a name to, required 4 Dao to use now, after months of changes. especially to use. 2 could have done the job, but Alex had added another 2 just because he could.

Dao of cutting and Dao of Sharpness was there for no reason other than to make the attack something that was extremely dangerous. He had thought of using just Dao of Sharpness, but he already had Cutting, so there was no point in not using it.

Other than the two, he had the Dao of Malleability and the Dao of Ductility too. The Dao of Malleability was required to make the attack malleable, to change shape as required, and the dao of Ductility was required to make the attack thin like a thread without it breaking on itself.

Without Dao of Ductility, Alex could only make it so thin without the attack failing to keep its own shape.

Without Dao of Malleability, he couldn't make it thin in the first place.

He stood in front of a river he had arrived in front of and readied his sword. He closed his eyes, focusing all his concentration on the attack.

By now, the combination of the four Dao had turned into a technique that he could use on his own, but it still took a lot of Intent to use.

Qi filled his sword and disappeared as if swallowed by the dark sword that was Midnight. However, at the edge of the sword, if someone looked closely, one could find a thin razor's edge light that slowly got brighter and brighter.

'Embrace it!' Godslayer's voice flowed through his mind. He didn't know what it meant, but he did. Sword Aura filled the sword and the outside.

'Embrace it,' Alex told himself. Sword Qi fluttered around him, all appearing from the Sword Aura that was gathered on his sword. However, from time to time, a single Sword Qi appeared amidst the tens of thousands of small motes of light, which disappeared just as quickly.

It happened once every fraction of a second, but that was still too slow and definitely too few for anyone including Alex to notice. But they were there.

They had been there for a few months now.

Alex took a deep breath and opened his eyes. Then, he swung.

The shallow sword slash was about as fast as any regular sword slash, only barely visible even to Alex.

The only reason Alex could even see it clearly was because of his Demon Eyes, which helped him see the strong Golden color of the technique as it passed.

Since 3 out of the 4 Daos used in the technique were Metal Dao, it only felt right for Alex to use Metal Qi in this instance.

The sword slash cut through the river, and the ground on the other side, and Alex even felt it cut through space itself, but space was too solid to stay cut for longer than an instant.

The attack vanished from Alex's eyes, disappearing into the distance. It left no visible damage to the surroundings at all.

Alex flew over to check what had actually happened and saw a thin line across the ground on the other side of the river that seemed to have dug into the ground. It was hard to tell just how far deep the attack had gone.

'There's barely any feedback,' Alex thought, but then that was a good thing. After all, the less noise and bombardment there was to an attack, the more efficient it was. No extra energy was being lost.

He nodded to himself and grabbed the sword once again. He had to try it a few more times to train until he didn't have to focus on creating the technique.

It took all of 15 tries before Alex felt as if his head was being hammered from all four sides. He sat down to cultivate and a few hours later, he was ready to go ahead again.

Chapter 1620: Final Days

"Leader, are you sure we're doing this?" Teng Xuegang asked as everyone started making their way out of the forest where they had made their home for the past 2 months.

Zhao Boqin didn't even look back when he answered. "What else are we going to do here?" he asked. "We have no more than 5 days remaining. It is about time for us to get as many points as we can."

Teng Xuegang said nothing and looked around at the others who were preparing to leave as well. Formations were being undone, and barriers were lifted. The fog that had surrounded them for the better part of the past 2 months had vanished already.

"Very well," Teng Xuegang said. "Let us leave then."

No more than 22 people flew out of the forest. No one else remained.

They had barely flown for a dozen or so kilometers when they sensed someone arriving. Spreading their spiritual sense, they quickly realized who it was.

"God damn..." Zhao Boqin muttered under his voice, not daring to let the words continue for much longer. He let his rage simmer as the figure became visible to his eyes.

Alex flew directly toward the group of 22 figures, smiling as he arrived not far away from where they were. They had all come to a stop.

"Your Majesty," Zhao Boqin spoke and gave a small bow. A cacophony of greetings floated from the group that stood behind the man.

Alex nodded. "Greetings," he said and then said nothing. An awkward silence fell on the crowd as Alex looked through everyone, and everyone turned to hide from his gaze. They had surely thought he was looking for people to challenge.

They had heard he had started being rather forceful about it for the past week or so.

"I don't see brother Mao or sister Fang," Alex said. "A quite a few more people."

"They lost, Your Majesty. They left the secret realm months ago."

Alex looked toward the middle of the group. The voice belonged to the old man who had the royal bloodline in him.

"I see," Alex said. "I'm not sure why I thought they would last longer. I'm surprised so many of you did."

"They were unfortunately one of the ones that fell under your tyranny, back when you didn't care for who you challenged. We had to stay back and they were forced to give up their loss for us," One of the women at the back said in a snarling voice before hurriedly remembering who she was talking to. "Your Majesty," she added.

"No matter," Alex said. "If they were weak, then they deserved to leave."

"Challenge who you wish to challenge and be done with this, Your Majesty," Zhao Boqin spoke in an almost rude tone. "We have things to do."

Alex gave a grin. "I wish to fight you, brother Zhao," he said. "But I will have to keep that thought aside for a day. I wish to see what else happens here first."

The man gave a look of confusion. "What do you mean?" he asked.

Alex simply pointed behind him. "Let's just wait for them to get here, shall we? They're close enough."

Zhao Boqin wasted no time in spreading his spiritual sense and even extended it beyond its regular capability. Nearly a hundred kilometers away, he sensed a handful of people, flying in the direction of the forest they had just left.

Soon enough, one of them would sense their group and adjust their route toward them.

"Hongxi," the man growled a little before taking a deep breath.

15 other people, mostly youths, arrived a few minutes later, and most looked at the gathering with an odd look.

"Leader," Shang Honxgi, or Sarah, gave a deep deep bow as a legionnaire would give her battalion leader. That irritated Zhao Boqin quite a bit.

"Your Majesty," she gave a slight bow toward Alex, almost as if he was an afterthought. But anyone who could see knew that this greeting held more respect than the one she had made to her leader.

That made Zhao Boqin even more angry.

Everyone remained vigilant where they hovered. With so many strong individuals in one place, anyone could start fighting at any time. They came here for that, but Alex's presence made a difference.

Everyone here knew that he was strong enough to handle everyone but their two leaders. And of them, Zhao Boqin had once lost to him. Although most of them believed he could only do it once each battle.

Zhao Boqin also knew that if he had been prepared, he could've dodged the final attack. He was sure of it.

"So, who wants to fight me?" Hongxi asked without waiting for anyone to challenge her first. Her eyes drifted between the two men she knew would want to fight her. No one else would.

Zhao Boqin looked at the two of them as well and gave some thought. "I'll fight you," he said. "If His Majesty wanted to fight me, he would've already challenged me, and I want to fight you while you're at your best so there is no doubt that I fought somebody that was weakened."

He turned to look at Alex. "If that is alright with His Majesty," the man asked.

Alex shrugged. "I will fight whoever wins here tomorrow," he said. "I expect the battle to last long." He looked toward Sarah who simply smiled. Her fighting method was more running than fighting, so Alex expected it to take some time.

"And the day after tomorrow, I will fight with whoever loses," Alex finished.

Zhao Boqin gave a contemplative look, while Sarah didn't show a hint of what she was thinking on her timeless face. "Leader, we will be the ones to fight first then," she said.

She turned around toward her group and spoke in a loud voice. "Our partnership is voided and the group is dismantled," she said. "Do whatever you want from henceforth."

Everyone behind her looked with surprise. They hadn't expected the gathering to be finished just like that. Quite a few of them looked at each other, knowing that they were no longer allies as they were before.

Hidden rivalries started showing face and one person even challenged another that they were flying right next to.

Chaos spread through the group and soon everyone was challenging everyone.

"Right, we don't need to be allies anymore," one of the voices behind Zhao Boqin spoke, and without stopping challenged another person.

One man challenged another man. A woman challenged another woman. A man challenged a woman, and a woman a man. The chaos kept spreading.

Soon enough, there were sounds of battle from all around them with only a few staying put without fighting. Those who remained watched the many fights with slack jaws.

Alex was simply amused by the fights and wondered if he should challenge someone too. He saw a woman staring up, a faint Saint Transformation realm cultivation base spreading from her that she seemed to have tried hard to hide.

"Lady Feirong," Alex called out to her. He hadn't talked to her much back when he was staying amongst them, but just enough that he knew who was who.

The girl gave a start when she turned around to find Alex looking directly at her. "Yo-Your Majesty?" she called out hesitantly as if hoping he was going to send her on a chore and forget she existed.

Alex's amicable smile looked anything but to the girl. She was properly horrified. When the words she wanted to hear the least came, the double buzzing of her talisman gave all the answers she needed to make.

Alex turned toward Zhao Boqin and Sarah and gave a quick nod. "I'll see one of you too tomorrow. I'll look forward to it," he said and flew away, with the woman flying behind him to quickly catch up.

Sarah watched Alex fly away and looked down at her leader. The smile on her face dropped a little and her emotions seemed colder. "We can not do this if you want to, Leader," she said. "Just give me the leader role. You know I'll beat you in just a few years. Why spend your precious few years debating on when that will be?"

"You!" Zhao Boqin hated that Shang Hongxi always knew exactly what to say to get him to become mad. If he allowed her to be the leader, he would have to step down and become her subordinate. And he didn't want to be a subordinate. Anything but that.

"If you want to fight, just fight. Win and we'll see. Without it, you're just a dog that does nothing but bark," he said, clearly wanting to rile her up.

"Of course, that is what I want," she said as she brought out a spear from her storage bag. "Let us begin."

Zhoa Boqin brought out his spear as well, and the two of them danced.

Two attacks landed on the two of them at the exact same time.

Sarah with her Saint Transformation 3rd realm managed to block an attack from Zhao Boqin. Zhao Boqin with his Saint Transformation 5th realm was once again surprised by just how strong Shang Hongxi was.

Despite the difference in cultivation base, she was on equal footing with him.

Still, he was sure he would win this fight.

Neither of them used their Immortal Qi, as that would be kept for when one couldn't dodge it. That was the only way for either of them to win instantly.

Alex watched from the distance as the two of them fought and their fight took them further and further away.