

Alchemy 241

Chapter 241: Cardinal City

Alex slowly opened his eyes and saw the rays of sun hitting him in the eyes. It was early in the morning, and the sun had just come up of the horizon.

He looked in front of him and saw a massive cityscape in front of him. He was high in the air, so he could see everything clearly.

Surrounded by giant mountain ranges was a massive city, at least 4 times as large as the scarlet city itself. Alex saw the tall buildings all over the city with a central area that was a massive open space with a single castle in the center.

Most of the houses were painted red, so the whole city had a red aesthetic.

"The Cardinal City?" Alex thought. Only then did he realize that the ship had stopped moving. He looked to the left and saw a few more ships approaching the city and stopped just as far as they had as well.

The disciples in that sect started getting down as well with the help of their elders. Alex looked back to check the disciples of his own ship and saw that there were none anymore.

'Are they gone anymore,' he thought and spread out his spiritual sense to check the surroundings.

"Oh, you are right here maste—" he turned around to see his master with red eyes and generally redder face. She had been crying.

"What's wrong, Master? Why are you crying?" he asked in surprise.

Ma Rong woke up from her stunned state and quickly rubbed her eyes. "Nothing. I'm not crying," she said as she sniffed a little.

"C'mon, let's go. Everyone had already left for the hotel. We are the only ones left," Ma Rong said and got up. She walked to the edge of the ship and jumped down.

Alex stood up and followed her. Alex still didn't know why she was crying. 'Did something happen while I was cultivating?' he thought. 'Speaking of which, I fell asleep once more, and master didn't wake me up? I thought she was going to.'

He looked at the sun and thought, 'Well, I woke up in time, so I guess it's fine.'

Once they were both down on the floor, Ma Rong swiped on hand mid-air and the ship suddenly changed into its miniature size. Ma Rong kept it in her robes and started walking in.

"Master, what happened in the ship? Why were you crying?" he asked once more.

"As I said, don't worry about it. Nothing happened," she said. But Alex didn't believe that whatsoever. 'Something definitely happened,' he thought, but he couldn't tell what. So he decided to change the question for now.

"So, about me falling asleep while cultivating, is that fixable?" he asked.

"Don't worry about that either. Just cultivate normally, and you will be fine. There is nothing wrong with you falling asleep," Ma Rong said.

Alex was genuinely confused now. 'Me falling asleep while cultivating is fine? What? That shouldn't be the case. That was the entire reason I cultivated last night. why would she say that?' he wondered.

He wanted to ask more questions, but they reached the gate of the city.

"Oh yeah, there are hidden masters all over the city, so try not to use your spiritual sense recklessly. They can sense it too if they have it," Ma Rong said to his through spiritual sense.

"I see, I will try not to use it then, Master," he said and quickly sucked in all the spiritual sense he was spreading to check the place.

There were many people lined up to enter the city, both individuals and big merchant groups.

"Daoist Ma, is that you?" a voice came from the left.

Ma Rong turned around to see who was calling her, and forced herself to smile a little as she said, "Nice to meet you again, Daoist Li, it's been a while."

"Haha, yeah. I haven't seen you since last year's competition." The person named Li was a tall man with a white robe and a clean, shaven face. He was holding a paper fan in his hand and made an amicable face when he spoke.

He then looked around her and asked, "Where are your sect members? Did they not arrive?"

"Oh no, they've already gone in first. I had a little something to do, so I stayed behind," she said.

"I see," he said and then turned to Alex and asked, "Who is this young fellow?"

"This is my disciple, Yu Ming. Yu Ming, this is Daoist Li, the sect leader of Golden Eagle sect, from Rose City," she said.

"Good Morning, Sect Leader Li," Alex greeted. The person named Li simply nodded.

"So, where are your sect member, Daoist Li?" Ma Rong asked.

"Oh, they are getting off the ship right now. I saw your ship earlier and came here to meet you," he said.

"I see. Oh, they're there. You will probably need to make some arrangements of yourself too, so I will leave you to it," Ma Rong said and walked away.

Alex felt that that was a very abrupt change in conversation, but he made no comments. Soon, they reached the gate and Ma Rong was way too recognizable to be stopped at the gate.

Only after walking in did Alex ask, "why did we leave the sect leader Li like that?"

"Cause he is annoying," Ma Rong said.

Alex was a little surprised. "But you seemed quite happy to talk with him," he asked.

"He's not a bad guy, it seems he likes me a lot, so it gets annoying when he keeps talking. See how he literally left behind his sect members to talk to me?" Ma Rong asked.

"I see," Alex said.

"Come, let's go to the hotel. The others must've already settled. You should get settled too," Ma Rong said.

Alex walked amongst the busy street of the capital city, looking at the festival-like atmosphere with everyone moving around in the street as if they were dancing. This was much crowded than the big cities in real life.

Chapter 242: Wan Li's Past

"Is this a regular thing, or are there more people here due to the competition," Alex asked.

"There are a little more people here due to the competition, but it's mostly just like this," Ma Rong said. She too was a little affected by the festival-like environment but not nearly as much as Alex.

Soon they reached a massive building with floors in the dozens. "Woah, that's a tall building," Alex said. He knew there were taller buildings in real life, but had never seen any personally.

Even the tv station building he had gone to with his cousin wasn't as tall as this.

Ma Rong walked in with Alex behind her. The hotel clerk did nothing when they saw the robes and stayed aside. Even if they dared to, the aura Ma Rong was sending out would scare them away.

"Ah, sect leader, you are here," Second Elder was standing in the hallway with the 18 other disciples and a few more elders nearby.

"You got the room?" Ma Rong asked.

The second Elder shook his head, and said, "They say they need the talisman from the association I gave you."

"Alright," Ma Rong said and walked up to the registration and showed the talisman. The man quickly nodded and gave them a bunch of keys.

"Let's go," Ma Rong said and was about to walk to the stairs when suddenly someone spoke up.

"Oh my, Oh my. If it isn't the sect known for getting second place in the alchemy competitions last year. What a stroke of luck that we could meet them here," someone said.

Ma Rong's face turned a little cold and a general air of hostility appeared in the other elders and disciples too. Only Wan Li and Alex were looking around the place, unknown about what was going on.

"I see you successfully found the way to the hotel, Daoist Xu. It's good to know that all those explosions haven't left you blind," Ma Rong said.

"Hah, why would they blind us?" the person named Xu asked.

"Oh, it's truly a surprise that you weren't deafened either. I'm happy for you, Daoist Xu," Ma Rong said.

The person named Xu was a short, chubby, hawk-faced cultivator wearing orange robes. He was currently seething in anger, and so were the rest of his sect members.

"Ah, you must be late to go make some more explosions. I won't stop you," Ma Rong said and left up the stair. The rest of the elders and disciples did the same as well.

The Daoist Xu remained behind, fuming at the fact that he didn't get the last word in.

Alex walked up to Ma Rong and asked, "Who's that?"

"Xu Beng, sect leader of the Spring Song Sect," Ma Rong said.

"Ah, that sect that makes the explosive pills? Those were annoying to fight against," Alex said.

"Yeah, they are one of the best alchemy sects in the Crimson Empire," Ma Rong said. There was a hint of annoyance in her voice.

"What's their grade? Are they better than us too?" Alex asked.

"They are around the same level as us in terms of Alchemy achievements. But they were created before us so they are already a first-grade sect. Since we are so close to each other in prowess, we have a deep-rooted history of the rivalry."

Ma Rong didn't seem as angry when she talked about this aspect of their relationship.

"Also, they said we were the second-best in last year's exam. Does that mean that we didn't do very well?" He asked.

"We did well. It's just that they did better. However, that won't be the same case this year. This competition, we will surely win," Ma Rong said with an eye full of determination.

"What makes you say that?" Alex asked. 'It's not just because of me right?' he wondered.

"Because this time we have you and Wan Li," Ma Rong said.

"Wan Li? He wasn't there in the last competition?" Alex asked.

"No, he... we made him stay behind to grieve the loss of his parents," Ma Rong said.

Alex didn't expect such reasoning. "His parents died?" he asked.

"Yes. His parents were merchants that left their son at Hong Wu sect ever since he was 10 years old. He's worked his way up to where he is for the last 9 years."

"While he was here, his parents were away on their business. But then, one day during a normal caravan ride, they were targeted by bandits and were killed. We tried to find the bandits, but they got away," Ma Rong said.

Alex remained quiet. 'Why is there so much death and tragedy in this game? Can no one have a normal life here?' he wanted to shout.

Alex turned back to look at Wan Li who was walking up the stairs with Fan Ruogang holding his arm.

"The boy hadn't been with his parents for so long that he didn't know how to feel when he learned the news. Poor boy didn't even know how to grieve. He spent his days doing nothing but preparing for the competition, holed up in his house."

"He didn't listen to any one of us, so when the time came for leaving, I made him stay behind and made sure he took care of his emotions. His grief was too much and it was eating him away inside. He just didn't know it," Ma Rong said.

"Thankfully, after the competition, Fanfan has been there with him, making him do other things aside from just alchemy, trying to take his mind off of his feelings once he was done grieving."

"She has truly been a blessing for him," Ma Rong said.

"I see," Alex said. He couldn't have imagined that the bubbly girl that seemed to want to do nothing but play was actually just trying to help him.

Alex started seeing both of them in a new light. Finally, he stopped looking at them as just Number 1 and Number 3 and instead thought of them as actual human beings with thought.

Chapter 243: Decorations

"Floor 18, this is our floor. Everyone listen up. There are about 12 rooms on this floor. That will be enough for the 23 of us. Get a partner and get yourself a room," Ma Rong said.

"Also, if you want to go outside, visit the shops, you are free to do so. However, do not cause any commotion or problems. If you want something, get it, if you can't leave. Also, don't leave the city, and be here by 6 pm in the evening. Dismissed."

She handed 1 key to the 2nd elder, kept 1 for herself, and handed the other 10 for the elders to distribute.

"Yu Ming, You will stay with Wan Li," She said and went to a room that the key belonged to. Alex took a key from the elders and walked to the room.

He opened the door and —

"Woah," he said in surprise at the somehow traditional and yet somehow modern-looking room. The floor was all marble and yet the beds and closets had no designs on them, making them look simple. There was a window to the side, showing an amazing view of the city.

Alex walked up to the room and opened the window. The room was facing south and he saw the tall trees of the southern forest far away from the wall.

The door opened once more.

"Oh h-hey Yu Ming, we are together for a while now, huh?" Wan Li tried to make some small talk.

"Yes. I see that is the case," Alex said. Wan Li looked around and saw the two beds and asked, "Which one do you want?"

"I'm fine with either. You can choose one," Alex said.

"Really? Ok then, I will take this," Wan Li said and took the bed that was left of the door. "By the way, are you excited about the competitions?" Wan Li asked.

"Kind of, yes. I actually don't really know what to expect so I can't get more excited," Alex said.

"Oh. I wish I could get excited. Instead, all I feel is nervousness. I- I have never done alchemy in front of many other people. Oh god, what if I fail?" he started worrying.

"Hey hey hey, you'll do fine. You are the best disciple of our sect. What are you worrying about?" Alex asked.

"But I've never made pills in front of others. It feels a little scary. I think I might mess up," Wan Li said.

"Didn't you make pills to pass the core exam in front of everyone?" Alex asked. For his turn, there were nearly a hundred people there, so he assumed the same would have been true for everyone.

"Y-yeah, but those were elders and a few other disciples. Not the thousands of people that are going to be there tomorrow. Just the different sects alone would reach a thousand members. Add onto that the competition staff and the audience— Oh god I'm getting nervous again," Wan Li said.

Alex was a little surprised. He hadn't really thought of how many people were going to be there. 'Sh*t. Thousands of people is a lot. Now I'm getting a little nervous,' he chuckled as he thought that.

"Don't worry. It will be fine. Besides, it won't be only you who takes part in the competition, it will be all of us. Have some faith in your teammates," Alex said.

"Yeah, I guess you're right," Wan Li calmed down a bit.

"Arghh, I'm quite tired. I think I will go sleep for a while. What will you do, Brother Wan?" Alex asked.

"Hmm, I think I will study for a while. Need to prepare for the competition the following days," Wan Li said. Alex smiled and went to lay down on his bed.

He laid down in a sleeping position and logged out.

Alex got up from his bed and checked the time. "Quite close to 8 huh, I guess I have some time. Although, when is the party happening?" he wondered and quickly freshened up before walking to the living room.

What was waiting for him there was a surprise.

"Woah," he said as he looked at the different decorations his cousin had put up on the house. To him, the amount of work that had to be put into this was beyond ridiculous.

He quickly found his cousin in the kitchen.

"Sister, you did all of this?" he asked with a look of disbelief. The decorations were truly a sight to behold for him.

"Oh hey, you are awake quite late," she said. "So... you like this right? I don't really know about designing myself, but... I think it looks good."

Alex looked at the decorations once again and said, "I am going, to be honest... I don't really know what is good and what is not. Now that I think about it, I don't even know what city parties are like. However, this does all look brilliant, so you can be proud of yourself, Sister."

Hannah smiled after hearing the compliments. "Alright sit, I will put on some breakfast for you," Hannah said, but Alex cut her off.

"Just sit and eat. I will get my own; you've already done too much today," Alex said and walked up to the counter. He put himself some milk and cereals and started eating.

He looked around the kitchen while eating and asked, "So, when are the guests coming? It should be early now that there is no shopping involved, right?" Alex asked.

"Yeah, they will come over for lunch. So we have.... About 3 hours or so. Enough time to cook. I've already put the turkey in the oven for a roast. As for the other things, we can cook an hour later," Hannah said.

"Alright, I will help you. I don't have anything to do today in-game, so I'm pretty free," Alex said.

"Okay, I will need your help anyway," Hannah said with a smile.

Alex soon finished his breakfast and started helping his cousin with the preparation of the different dishes for the party.

Chapter 244: The Party

TING TONG TING

The doorbell rang at around 10 am. Alex and Hannah were in the kitchen and had just started to cook. They had finished making a few side dishes but the main dishes were still remaining.

"Who is that?" Alex asked.

"I... don't know. It's barely 10 am. There's still an hour before the guests should be arriving. I wonder who it is," Hannah said and walked to the door.

She looked at the footage from outside of her door and after seeing who it was, she quickly opened the door.

"Hey, Hannah!!" Sarah said with a big smile and immediately hugged her with a few bags in her hand.

"Hello." Emily walked in from behind Sarah.

"Hey! Why are you guys so early? Did I give the wrong time on my message?" Hannah asked.

"Oh no. We thought that you guys might need some hand in getting everything ready, so we came to help," Sarah said.

"Oh thank you so much. I don't know if we need it, but a few extra hands never hurt anybody," Hannah said with a smile and looked at Emily as she said, " Thanks for coming too, Emily. Both Alex and I really appreciate it."

Emily made a meek little nod and said nothing.

"Haha, it was Emily's idea to come help in the first place. I was fully ready to come on time, but she made me come help," Sarah said.

"Oh," Hannah said with a surprise.

Emily quickly pinched Sarah on the side, clearly not enjoying the attention. Sarah just said 'ow' a few times and jumped to the side.

"Haha, here. We brought you guys a housewarming gift," Sarah said as she handed Hannah the bags.

Hannah smiled and took it as she said, "Thank you, we really appreciate the both of you coming here today. Come on in." Hannah took them inside their home.

Sarah and Emily walked in and were immediately shocked at the utter size of the place. "Woah," Sarah said as she looked at the place that looked like it was meant to house a millionaire.

"Damn, you guys own this place or rent it?" Sarah asked.

"We rent it. My parents are from the North and Alex is from the south, so we are here temporarily for at least a while," Hannah said.

"Still, this is an amazing crib. How much does it cost monthly? I assume it's something like 4000 dollars right?" Sarah asked.

Emily was a little surprised when she heard the price.

Hannah gave a smug smile and said, "It costs 10,000 dollars a month."

Both Sarah and Emily's jaw dropped in surprise. "Wait wait wait, you are pulling my leg, right? We have the exact same amount of space back in our place and it costs 2000\$."

"I know this is better furnished and in a better building, but... isn't 10,000 dollars a lot?" Sarah asked.

"Oh, that's probably because we don't have the same space," Hannah said.

"What do you mean?" she asked. Hannah simply pointed to the staircase at the side and said, "The upper floor is ours too."

"Wait? You guys are taking up 2 floors?" Sarah asked in surprise.

"Yeah. Come let me show you guys," Hannah said and took them both upstairs. Alex was left alone to do all the current cooking and simply just waited for them to come down.

"Damn, if that is truly what you get for rent then... I can see why it would be worth it. Wow, I thought I hit the jackpot in apartments, you guys are something else," Sarah said.

Emily was still silently carrying the look of shock.

"Hello, Alex." Sarah and Emily made their way into the kitchen and started helping. An hour quickly passed and they managed to finish making the dishes 15 minutes before the guests were to arrive.

Most of them were friends of Hannah from her classes, some were Sarah's friends. Alex hadn't invited anyone since he didn't have the time to.

So, the guests who arrived were all girls. Alex talked to a few of them out of courtesy, but it seemed they talked back to him out of courtesy too.

He even secretly asked her once.

"Sister, you don't have a guy friend?"

"I do, but I decided not to. I didn't know who was coming, so I only brought the girls," she had said.

The foods and drinks were soon distributed and Alex was simply surprised at just how much these girls drank alcohol.

The party was for the release of the capsules, so they eventually ended up talking about the game. Alex sat there listening to the different things they were saying.

Only one of the girls there was from the western continent but not from the crimson empire, so he couldn't even ask her anything.

In the end, after a couple of hours, the party was over and people started leaving. Soon, everyone but Sarah and Emily was gone.

"You guys should return too," Hannah said.

"No, we will help you with the cleanup," Sarah said. Hannah simply smiled and said nothing. She really needed the help.

Soon everyone was helping with the cleanup. Alex picked up the paper plates and started stuffing them down the trash bag, Sarah vacuumed the floor, Emily cleaned the tables and furniture while Hannah washed the remaining dishes.

After 15 minutes, they finally finished it and sat down in the living room to rest.

"That was a nice celebration party," Sarah said.

"Thank god everything went as planned," Hannah said with a laugh.

"So many people kept commenting on how nice your place is haha. To be honest, I can understand their feeling. It really is a nice place," Sarah said.

"Yeah, it's a nice place. I got it with 3 of my other friends, but they all left after their studies ended. So now, only Alex and I stay here. Honestly, the extra rooms are wasted on us," Hannah said. But then, she thought of something and slowly turned and asked.

"Sarah, Emily, would you guys be willing to move into the spare rooms?"

Chapter 245: Delivery

Alex was a little surprised that his cousin asked the two something like that without consulting him. However, he didn't find himself opposed to the idea.

"Stay here? I... I don't know if we could. It's an amazing place, but it's quite expensive I have to say," Sarah said.

"Why would you care about that? You are making a lot right?" Hannah asked.

"That... is true. But still, it's quite a lot of money," Sarah said.

"Don't worry. We will be sharing the rent. To be honest, that will help us alleviate some of the pressure too," Hannah said.

"Hmm... I will have to think about it for a few days. What about you, Emily?" Sarah asked.

"I'm... not really opposed to the idea. It's just that I don't think I will be able to afford the rent at all. Just 500 dollars a month is already a lot for me. 2500 is not something I can do easily," Emily said.

"Alright then, I will let you guys think about that. You are always welcome," Hannah said.

TING TONG TING

"Huh? Did someone forget something?" Hannah said and went up to check the live footage outside her door. There were two men standing there, but they were someone she didn't recognize at all.

At first, Hannah got scared a little, but then she noticed their clothing. It was a matching uniform.

"Oh, wait for a second, what time is it?" She quickly took out her phone and checked the time. It was 3 Pm. "Hey guys, my capsule is here," Hannah said.

"Oh, it's time already?" Alex said as he walked up to the door, which Hannah opened.

"Hello, are you Ms. Hannah Wright?" the men asked.

"Yes, that is me," Hannah said.

"We have a package from Deva Corp., please sign here." Hannah quickly signed the package and 2 meters by 1 meter by half a meter cardboard package was soon hauled in by the two men. After bringing it inside, they left.

"Huh? They aren't gonna help us set up the thing?" Alex was a little surprised.

"I don't know. How are we even going to carry such a heavy thing?" Hannah worried.

"Oh, you guys didn't read the forum this morning?" Sarah asked.

Alex and Hannah looked at each other in confusion. "Why? We've been busy with the party all morning, so I haven't had time to check it," Hannah said.

"Of course. Umm... you two, try carrying it," Sarah said. Hannah didn't know what she meant, but that was the only thing they could do, so Alex and Hannah got to either side and started grabbing the bottom of the package.

"On 3 okay? 1, 2, 3"

Both Alex and Hannah put massive force into picking the package. "Woah" they both screamed as they nearly lost their balance.

The capsule was incredibly light. Perhaps only 30 kilograms at best.

"Hahaha, that's a nice reaction from you guys," Sarah said as she put down her phone that she was using to secretly film them.

"W-Why is it so light? Did they forget the capsule?" Alex asked.

"No, it's just supposed to be that light. People have been posting about it in the forums all day long," Sarah said.

"Let's open it up here then," Alex said. Hannah quickly brought a knife from the kitchen and started cutting open the cardboard box open.

Alex spread apart the cardboard flaps and revealed the capsule. "Woah," he said in surprise. All 3 of the girls came in close to check as well.

"Damn, that looks better up close than in the picture," Sarah said.

The capsule was a little smaller than the cardboard it came in. It had a curved cover on top and was made entirely of something that felt like both steel and metal.

It was mostly white in color with the occasional gray and blue streaks of lines running across it. Alex and Hannah carried the capsule up to her room and put it in the corner of the room.

"Wait, it's so light. Won't it fall over if I move while I'm in the game? Or even when I'm trying to get in or out of the capsule?" Hannah asked.

"Oh that. Wait for a second, it should be in the box," Sarah quickly ran downstairs and came back up a minute later with a bunch of things in her hand.

Some of them were wires for the capsule, but there was one thing that was a little unexpected. They were suction cups.

"Take these and put them under the capsule or around the side. If you manage to grab hold of something smooth with these like the floor or the wall, you don't have to worry about falling over at all," Sarah said.

Alex quickly took the suction cups and put them under the capsule before setting them on the floor. After pushing on it a little, the suction cups got to working and the system was as rigid as if it were super glued to the place.

"There are also screws in the box, but I don't think you guys would want that," Sarah said. They put the cables in place and finally, the capsule turned on.

They admired the capsule for a bit. "Should I... get in?" Hannah asked the crowd.

"Uhh... you can get in, but we will have to leave for now. Sorry, but My capsule will be coming soon too, so we have to leave," Sarah said.

"Oh, when?" Hannah asked.

"Should be within the hour."

"Oh, then you better hurry. Let us walk you down," Hannah said and along with Alex, took the two girls to the building door at the bottom.

"Thank you so much for coming today. We will see you guys next week when the classes are back on," Hannah said. "Oh, and don't forget to think about the proposal. We would love to have you two as roommates."

"Ok, bye."

After the girls left, Alex and Hannah went back to their apartment. They couldn't wait to try out the new capsule.

Chapter 246: Feature

Alex and Hannah were back in the room.

"Umm... you wanna try it first?" Hannah asked after seeing Alex's enchanted face.

"No, sister. It's yours, you should get in," Alex said.

"Stop trying to act nice and just get in," Hannah said as she pushed him towards the capsule.

Alex stopped rejecting the offer and got into the capsule. The suction cups worked very nicely and the capsule did no wobbling as expected.

He slowly sat down inside and then laid inside it. It inside had its own mattress and pillow to make the players feel comfortable. It was a snug fit for him.

"What do we do now?" he asked.

"Um, try closing the lid? I'll see if there are some manuals somewhere," Hannah said and left the room. Alex did as she said and lied back down before closing the lid to the capsule.

As soon as he did that, his mind started feeling heavy, and soon, he logged into the game.

He opened his eyes and got up from the bed back in the room inside the hotel. He had successfully logged in without any notifications from the system.

He immediately put up his hands to block the intense light coming from the window. There was a loud noise right next to him. He turned around to see that Wan Li was reading his book in a very loud voice.

Also, he felt like he had a massive fever right now with how hot he felt. 'Is that me or is something on fire?' he wondered. There was also a weird smell in the air that he just couldn't put a finger on.

Wan Li seemed to have noticed him moving and very slowly lifted his head. He then said something quite incomprehensible.

"O-H-H-E-Y-B-R-O-T-H-E-R-Y-U-Y-O-U-A-R-E-A-W-A-K-E." Wan Li spoke so slowly yet so loudly that Alex couldn't really understand what he meant.

Alex realized just then what actually was happening. Everything happening right now hinted that his Focus Mode was on.

The bright light, the hot environment, the slowness of time, the weird smell, and the loudness of the sound were all the things that happened when his focus mode was active.

He quickly tried to cancel his focus mode, but he couldn't. 'Huh? What's happening?' he wondered. He tried to cancel the focus mode once more, but nothing was happening.

Not sure what was happening, he wondered if it was a bug of the game or something. This wasn't a normal Focus mode either. All of his senses were on another level when compared to the normal focus mode.

"A-R-E-Y-O-U-O-K-A-Y-B-R-O-T-H-E-R-Y-U," Wan Li spoke once more. Alex looked at him and slowly did a gesture to inform him that it was okay. He didn't want to tip him off that something was weird.

'Damn, maybe it really is a bug. I should leave and check it online," Alex thought and immediately logged out.

He slowly opened the lid back and got out of there. Thankfully, he wasn't disoriented or anything. He was still weirded out by the experience.

Hannah walked into the room with a manual for the capsule.

"Hey, why are you out? Get back in. I told you to try it out, didn't I?" Hannah said.

"Huh? Oh, I... already logged in and came back out," Alex said.

"Oh, so you found out how to get it working? Then you should have to spend a little more time in there," Hannah said.

"I... It was weird. I think the capsule has a bug in it. I can't stop the Focus mode at all," Alex said.

"Huh? A bug? Don't tell me we have to return it back. Tsk. Let's check the internet, maybe they have some answers," Hannah said, and quickly opened the forums.

"Oh, here it is, the Bugs post. Let's see.... Huh? It says that it's not a bug though. Lemme check this link, wait for a second," Hannah said and clicked some link the comments had.

"Features? Look at this, Alex. It says that the focus mode is a feature,? not a bug," Hannah said. Alex quickly went and read what was written on the post.

-Focus mode has been permanently added to the players who play with capsules. Players will have to learn to deactivate it, instead of activating it now.-

"It's auto from now on? That's gonna be a problem," Alex said. His pill-making required expert precision in his timing and movement when using his Qi. With focus mode ON, it was very hard to grasp the proper timing of when to follow the recipe as his perception of time would not be correct at all.

"Hmm, maybe. Or maybe it's easy to deactivate it. You should try it out extensively when your capsule comes too," Hannah said.

"Maybe," Alex said as he kept on reading. There weren't many other in-game features worth reading and most of the features were from real life.

One of the most beneficial ones he found was that if the player ever lost consciousness, they would be ejected from the game, unlike the previous times when they would just be in the game forever until they woke up, they were now force logged out.

'I wonder that will work with my sleeping issue if that even counts as a faint in the first place,' Alex thought.

"Alright, I will go back in. Since we won't need to eat food anymore, if I don't get out, don't wait for me, okay?" Hannah said and went into the capsule.

She closed the lid and soon logged into the game. Alex left the room and went back to his room. He couldn't wait to have his own capsule as well.

He entered the room and got on the bed. He looked at the helmet on his bed, something that he would have to store away soon.

'Ah, I probably have some explaining to do,' He thought as he remembered his interaction with Wan Li and put on the helmet before logging back into the game.

Chapter 247: City Tour

Alex opened his eyes at the same place he left. The window was no longer glaring with intense lights. He couldn't feel the hot temperature or hear the loud sounds.

Wan Li seemed to have gotten back to reading his books and didn't bother with Alex.

'This feels much better. Why would the developers have to do something so stupid like making Focus Mode permanent?' he thought. He really disliked the complete change in senses from when he was out of the game to inside the game.

He stood up from his bed and looked at the time. It was around half past 3. 'Maybe I should go out and check the city,' Alex thought.

"Hey brother Wan, you want to go see the city?" Alex asked.

"The city? Uh... I already did it in the afternoon. You were asleep the entire time I left and came back," Wan Li said.

"Oh, then I will go check it out. Is there anything good I should check?" Alex asked.

"I don't really know; we didn't cover a very large area," Wan Li said.

With the sheer scope of the city, Alex could understand why. "Alright then, I'm leaving," Alex said and walked out of the room.

Wan Li was in the room, so he didn't really care about locking the room.

"Hmm... Yu Ming, you are out? Are you going somewhere?"

Alex saw his master walking up the staircase with a bunch of elders.

"Yes, master. I was thinking of going out to visit the city," Alex said. "Where are you coming back from, master?" His master and elders didn't look like they were coming back from a normal visit to the city.

"We are coming back from the sect meeting that was held by the competition holders in the city. They gave us some more information about the upcoming competitions," Ma Rong said.

"Oh, it must be something important then. Do I need to stay and listen?" Alex asked.

"No, I will tell you guys later tonight. For now, just go and visit the city. Remember to not leave very far away and come back to the hotel by 6 am," Ma Rong said.

Alex nodded and bowed to the elders before leaving. He walked down the 17 flight of stairs and finally left the hotel.

The hotel was situated in the western quadrant of the city. He remembered the location and started walking towards the north.

Along the way, he saw the general festiveness of the city. There were many people out on the streets. The vendors shouted the best they could to attract the people on the streets, while the people looked around for fun things to buy.

Alex was a little overwhelmed seeing so many people in the city. When he had entered the city this morning, it was just that, morning. That couldn't compare to the late afternoon when most people left to shop.

He looked around him and saw an unnatural amount of young people in similar robes. "So many sects are here today," he thought as he looked at the myriad of different robes.

He walked along the roads as he looked for more things.

"That looks nifty." He would buy it.

"Master might want that." He would buy it.

"That should fit Senior Sister." He would buy it.

"Ah, I really like that." He bought that too.

The items were quite cheap and didn't even cost a single spirit stone in total. He was buying items not very useful to normal cultivators.

He saw a weapon and artifacts shop and looked at the armors on display. 'Should I buy an armor? I do need them quite a bit,' he thought, but soon decided not to.

"I should buy one at the auction house; Those are probably better," He said to himself. So, he left the place and walked to other places.

He entered an area that was made for cultivators. There were places that sold cultivation methods, different techniques, formation blueprints, formation flags. Talisman inks and papers, Alchemy ingredients, pills, puppets, etc.

The stuff around him was on another level. He could even feel a high cultivation base walking right past him from time to time.

'Damn, so many experts. I need to be careful here,' Alex thought. He looked around but didn't really see anything that was worth buying. Still, he walked into the alchemy buildings to see if they sold any new types of pills.

He walked in and started looking through the glass cases that showed the different names of the pills and transparent pill bottles within.

Unfortunately, nothing there caught his eyes. The pills were mostly Earth Grade pills and almost all of them were common rank pills. The True Rank pills and Heaven-grade pills were hidden in the back room probably.

He wanted to buy recipes, but unfortunately, nobody sold any that he already didn't have. 'Master must've already bought everything available for free in the market,' he thought.

As for the alchemy ingredients, he found a few that he didn't have and bought them. It cost him a few spirit stones that he was willing to let go of.

After finding nothing else to buy, he walked out of the alchemy building. Talisman and Artifacts didn't really interest him. Formations, however, seemed quite... intriguing.

'That formation Song Zun had... it somehow used the Yang Jade to strengthen his body enough to not take damage from a sword that was being used by me. He didn't have much attack himself, but the defense was very high.'

'I might not be able to get the same formation for me, but... there might be others that do the same thing. I will need to understand formations to even begin to understand what I have in my mind,' Alex thought and made his way to the formations building.

However, before he could even make it to the building, he saw someone coming out of the building. It was a man around the same height as him.

That didn't catch Alex's attention, however, what did was the yellow robe he was wearing.

'Tiger Sect.'

Chapter 248: Ambition

Alex looked at the man in front of him. He was a couple of years older than him, not much, and had a stoic-looking emotionless face that was cleanly shaven.

The most surprising thing about him to Alex however was the orange linings on his yellow robes. 'A Core disciple? Of course, that makes sense,' Alex thought.

He didn't remember seeing the man anywhere in the sect before, so the man shouldn't remember him at all. 'To be fair, I didn't see very many core disciples in the sect,' he thought.

The man looked at Alex for a single moment before ignoring him. He didn't care about anyone else at all. He started walking down the stairs and soon went past Alex.

Alex secretly checked his cultivation base and nearly missed a step of stairs in surprise. 'Holy sh*t. 3rd Mind Tempering realm? That's nearly as strong as Senior sister. The core disciples of Tiger sect are no joke,' Alex thought.

As he turned away from the guy, a girl walked past him. "Brother wait for me, don't walk out so fast," the girl said as she tried to catch up to the man.

'Sh*t,' Alex thought. He quickened up his pace to hide inside, but suddenly, a hand fell onto his shoulders stopping him in place.

"Hey mister, wait for a second," the girl stopped him. "Can you turn around?" she said. Ning sighed. He didn't know if he should turn around or not.

In the end, it would be more suspicious to just keep walking, so he turned around. "Can I help you with something?" he asked.

"YOU!" the girl said in surprise. "I thought I recognized you, but how could it be you?" She said in surprise.? She looked all over his body and asked, "W-Why are you wearing this uniform? Where is your Tiger Sect uniform?"

'Sigh, Master made us go separately so that I didn't have to face this same situation, and yet, here we are,' he thought. He looked at the girl in front of him. The twin-tailed cheerful girl, he recognized her very well.

'She's the First Elder's disciple, right? She came with him to recruit me. Which mean...' Alex's eyes moved past her to the young man behind her who had stopped to see what his junior sister was doing with this man.

'Du Yuhan, Number 2 of the Tiger sect. He had finally met the second-best disciple of the Tiger sect.' Alex looked at him a bit and thought, 'His reputation suits him.'

"Hey, I am talking to you," the girl said. "What are you doing in these robes? Who did you even come with? I didn't see you on the ship?"

"I am a disciple of the Hong Wu Sect. Is there anything wrong with me wearing these robes?" he asked.

"What? What are you talking about? Did you leave the tiger sect? Is that why nobody has seen you this last week?" she asked

"SuSu, what's wrong?" Du Yuhan walked up after seeing his junior sister in a heated talk with the man.

"Brother, it's him. The disciple that defeated Huo Tu; the one master wanted to recruit but got denied," the girl named Su said.

Only finally did Du Yuhan's bother to take notice of the man in front of him. He was very far away when he checked the man's fight on the stage back at Tiger sect, so he hadn't got a good look at him, but now, he saw him clearly.

He took notice of his clothing and asked, "Are you not part of the Tiger sect anymore?" he seemed genuinely confused as he asked the question.

'Damn him, he got straight to the point I wanted to avoid. Sigh, the master said he would reveal the next time, but I am afraid I might have to do it now. Damn, should I say it or not,' he quickly thought and in the end decided to say that he was still part of the Tiger sect.

"If you don't want to speak, then you don't have to say anything. If you aren't part of the Tiger sect, I'm not going to say anything about it. Even if you are and are dressing like this for some reason, I will just ask that you don't do anything to bring down the name of both Tiger sect and Hong Wu sect."

Du Yuhan then nodded and left Alex. 'What the—? I didn't expect that at all,' Alex thought.

"Huh? Brother, are you going to leave just like that? Don't you want to ask him how he won against Huo Tu" the girl asked.

"It doesn't matter. As long as I become the strongest, nothing else will matter," Du Yuhan said and started walking away.

The girl wanted to ask Alex some more questions but quickly left behind her senior brother.

Alex stood in the middle of the stairs, dumbfounded at what had just happened. 'I thought the First Elder wanted to recruit me, so I assumed he would be the same type to either get me on his side or get rid of me in case I turn into? an opposition in the future.'

'However, he seems nothing like that. He... just wants to become strong huh? I can't help but admire his resolve. The strongest, as long as I become one, nothing else will matter.' Alex replayed the man's words in his mind.

"One doesn't simply become the second greatest disciple of a nearly 1st-grade sect without having an ambition huh?" Alex thought. "What about me? Do I have any ambition?" he started thinking.

He had wanted to see the city from early on, which he fulfilled. He wanted to earn money; he fulfilled that as well. Now, the next thing he wanted to do was...

"I want to explore the world. I want to see The desert, the ocean, the frozen lands, the giant jungles, the volcanoes. But I can't do that unless I... I cannot do that until I become strong as well."

Chapter 249: Frivolous Purchases

Alex walks into the building with the different formation items. Only after entering did he realize that he didn't know the first thing about formation. He realized that what he knew about formations from the books and hearsay didn't even crack the surface.

There were items around him that he didn't even know the use for. People were talking about stuff he didn't understand at all.

'Damn, I thought knowing that it was just putting flags and items in a specific order was all it was, but it seems even they themselves are very specific. This is not any less extensive than alchemy, huh,' he thought.

'Still, I need to buy at least the most basic formation blueprint and required items. I want to start learning with it,' He thought.

Although, learning both Alchemy and formations might have him spreading himself too thin, but he had planned to focus on Alchemy more than Formations, so that should be fine.

He bought a basic formation blueprint called the Qi Gathering formation. It was a common rank formation that gathered Qi from 5 spirit stones in 5 points of the formations and gathered it all at the center of it. It was a common rank formation that would be about 2? meters in radius at most.

'This should be a good starting point,' Alex thought. 'I should go learn some better formation books from the library here in the capital in the following days.'

After getting what he wanted, Alex walked out of the building. He looked around at the other buildings and thought, 'Now that I'm already here, it will be a waste to not visit the other buildings right?' he thought.

He went to the talisman building and bought himself a few pairs of communication talismans that could work up to 2 kilometers away. These talismans came in pairs and were always linked to one another.

'Shame it's not like a smartphone. I will have to take one for each contact,' Alex thought.

He then walked to the Weapons and Artifact building. He surprisingly found that there were a lot of things to buy here.

"Oh wow, these storage bags allow so much extra space. I should buy a few," he thought as he looked at the various storage bags in the sale. They ranged from the ones he currently had to ones that had nearly 20 times as much space.

Although, those cost a lot. So, Alex only bought around 5 storage bags that were about 5 times larger in storage capacity. These would help him hold a lot more items in fewer bags. He wouldn't have to carry around nearly 10 different bags as he did right now.

He was also surprised when he found disposable cauldrons. These were much worse than the ones in Alchemy hall, and that was perfect for Alex who was looking to make random pills that might explode at a moment's notice.

They were also incredibly cheap, so he bought around 100 of these. He wasn't sure if that was enough or not however.

The next thing he did was buy a Common Mortal grade sword and armor. They weren't cheap but were cheap enough for Alex who held hundreds of spirit stones.

'These should help me a bit. The sword can be used as a decoy during fights, and the armor will help deceive my enemies into thinking my defense is good because of the armor. Although, it should help increase that a bit,' Alex thought.

He wasn't optimistic about getting an armor at the Auction house now. Especially, since he didn't have many True Spirit stones anymore.

Once he was done buying other things like boxes for alchemy ingredients and bottles for the pill, he was left with not a lot of spirit stones.

'Sigh, I might have to sell some of the pills in the auction houses,' Alex thought. He didn't have many pills that he had made for the purpose of selling, and the ones he did, he didn't think were worthy of being sold.

'I might have to find a place to specifically make pills to sell,' he thought. He remembered master talking about Alchemy guilds and halls that allowed rogue alchemists to make pills, so he would try going there someday.

Once he was done with that section of the city, he took a detour back to the hotel. Along the way, he saw a restaurant for cultivators and went in to see how it was.

Apparently, one could spend a little extra to go upstairs to get a premium service, but Alex didn't care. He sat alone by a window and ordered a simple stew.

It wasn't as simple, however. With every bite, his system kept on activating to give him notifications about his body accepting the meal and its Qi. It was almost annoying at one point.

The Qi was only at the 1000s though, so it was quite negligible. Still, the taste was heavenly. The vegetables in the stew were well cooked and the meat practically melted with each chew.

Finally, after 15 minutes of continuous eating, he finished the meal. He paid the money and left the restaurant.

Just as he was walking out, he saw a girl enter the restaurant. She was quite beautiful, but not captivating. Quite tall, but not taller than him. Lean and thin, but not anorexic.

Anyone who saw her would think of her as a true beauty, But Alex didn't. He only had a single thought, 'Have I seen her before?'

The girl quickly walked past him and he didn't dare use spiritual sense to check her face again. So,? he just forgot about it and walked back to the hotel.

He bought a few casual clothes for himself along the way, before reaching the hotel a few dozen minutes before it was 6 pm.

He walked up the 17 flight of stairs, wondering if a lift was even feasible in this place. Finally, he reached his room and walked in.

Chapter 250: Handwriting

The door was open, and Wan Li was inside still reading. 'Damn, he must be really studious. No wonder he is the best disciple in alchemy,' Alex thought.

'I should read some more advanced knowledge in the library some next days. At the very least, I can keep them in mind while I tread for True realm,' he thought. His next course of action was to go to the Tiger sect and fight a lot to stabilize his cultivation base and breakthrough as fast as possible.

It was getting late but he had already eaten a lot at the party so he didn't want to eat anything for the day. He couldn't even cultivate in front of Wan Li, so he just decided to stay there doing nothing.

'Oh right, let's manage my storage bags,' he thought and started to quickly swap items around. He quickly filled 3 different bags with 2 different types of ingredients, two bags for common rank pill ingredients, and one bag for True rank pill ingredients.

He kept the Saint Rank pill ingredients in their original bag since that was enough. He kept his weapons and armors and cauldrons all in a single old bag, and everything miscellaneous was spread around the older bags. He decided to keep the other 2 new bags for something he might end up encountering in the future.

"What are you doing, brother Yu?" Wan Li asked.

"Oh, I was just organizing my things," Alex said.

"Ah, I thought you were just bored or something. It looked like you had nothing to do," Wan Li said.

"You're... not wrong. I didn't know what to do so I started to organize my bags," Alex said.

"I see. Do you want to read my books? I have a lot of those," Wan Li said.

Alex thought for a bit. He didn't really have anything to do so he accepted. Wan Li took out a book from his storage bag and handed it to Alex.

Alex sat back down on his bed, looking at the very unprofessional-looking book. 'There isn't even a title,' Alex thought as he opened the book.

The very first page of the book was surprising for him. That was because the handwriting on the book was very bad. 'Huh? What sort of person sells a book with such bad handwriting?' Alex wondered.

He thought for a bit and a possibility struck him.

"Brother Wan Li, did you by any chance write this book?" he asked. Looking at the condition of the book, that was the only thing that fit the situation.

"Oh yeah. I have a not-so-great memory, so it takes time for me to learn stuff. As such, I instead write everything down on my book so that I can easily read it later on and remember it," Wan Li said.

"You will hopefully learn something from it too, Brother Yu," Wan Li said with a smile. Alex was surprised. Someone actually wrote a book on their own? He couldn't believe it.

He sat back down and decided to read it despite the nearly illegible handwriting.

He read for a few minutes, and soon his eyes started opening wide. The more he read, the more he would be surprised.

'What in-depth analysis. He has written everything that happens during an alchemy process down, and that is despite the fact that he doesn't have a spiritual sense.'

'Just how good of an alchemist would he become if he could use spiritual sense and the Eidetic memory that came after unlocking it,' Alex thought.

The book alone was evidence enough as to how much Wan Li had put in to reach the spot he was at. It was easy to see someone's success and assume they were successful because of their luck.

However, nobody saw the labor and pain that went into making a successful person. Wan Li was such. In the sect, he was revered as a disciple on a status that couldn't be touched.

But many people forgot that he was once an outer sect disciple too. He too started right where they had started. He worked hard, while others waited for their luck.

Alex continued to read the book and absorb more of the information. The book was about normal common pills and the in-depth analysis of their production. They were more of an experimental log where Wan Li would make the same pills and determine why they came out different.

From his perspective, it seemed that the most common causes were ingredients. The second was timing, and the third was the temperature of the flames.

The better one was at controlling or choosing these things, the better a pill would be. Alex knew these things from his lesson with master and his pill-making as well. But, he had never seen such a detailed note down of the things that happened when the pills were made.

'Damn, this is comprehensive. It details everything he discovered. One does not simply become so good in alchemy huh. I am the only one who got something that helped me in alchemy. How long would it take me to reach my current level if I didn't have the Alchemy God's Knowledge? 10 years? 15 years?' Alex wondered.

He continued reading the book and took in as much as he could, and finally finished the book after nearly an hour. He had read as fast as he could and even then the contents in the book had taken him an hour.

He walked up to Wan Li and handed the book. "Thank you, Brother Wan," Alex said.

"Oh, you finished it? You want another?" Wan Li asked.

"It's okay. I will need time to absorb what I just read," Alex said.

"Okay"

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"Hmm" both of them turned towards the door.

"Oh god, it's probably Fanfan. She must be coming to play," Wan Li said. Alex walked to the door to see if it was her.

However, the person at the door was Fan Ruogang.

"Sect Leader has called everyone to her room for a meeting," she said and left for another door.

Alex turned around towards Wan Li and said, " Brother Wan, it seems it's time for the meeting."