

## Alchemy 391

### Chapter 391: The farmhouse

"Mhmm, this meat is so good. As expected of sister, she's a genius at anything she puts her hand on," Liz said as she bit on the piece of chicken meat.

"Your brother prepared fresh chicken meat today since you guys were coming. That's why it's so tasty. I merely added a bit of flair," Helen said.

"I have tried cooking, but I can never get it to your level. Tell me, where did you learn it from? Were you learning culinary art before you met my brother?" Liz asked.

"Of course not. I learned it all from the cookbooks that the people gave us from those restaurants your brother sells to. You just have to follow the recipe, and you can easily make the chicken this perfect too," Helen said.

The other 4 people in the dining room ate without making any sounds, but they too couldn't deny how good the food was.

"I'm sometimes surprised how both Alex and big brother managed to stay in shape when they got to eat this delicious a meal all the time," Liz said.

"Haha, I wonder that too. I think their metabolism is just too high," Helen said.

"So, how're your classes going?" Alex's father spoke, trying to change the topic from food to something else.

"Yeah, it's good. Our assignments are coming up soon for this semester," Alex said.

"Oh, so quick. I guess that makes sense," Helen said. "What about you Hannah?"

"My classes ended 2 weeks ago. I'm just waiting for the exams and I'm done with university," Hannah said.

"Oh wow, look at you. You're not even 22 and you're already finishing University. I remember when you were here last time. You were so excited about going to the University," Helen said.

"Well, I doubt she will even need the university degree though," Alex's father said from the side.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Helen got a little angry.

"What?" he made an innocent face. "Don't you know how much these kids make nowadays? It's highly unlikely they will ever need an actual job. At least not one where they have to spill blood and sweat," he said.

Helen still made an angry face. "What? I'm saying that as a good thing," he said. Then he turned towards Alex and Hannah, and said, "Be frugal, learn to save your money, invest it somewhere. If you do all those things correctly, you won't ever need to worry about money with how much you guys are making."

Hannah and Alex nodded. Alex had already done everything he could and had also made his cousin do the same thing. So, now they had most of their money in savings and only a little in use.

Hannah however had a regular supply of Spirit stones as opposed to Alex however, so she constantly had excess money in her bank account.

They talked for a little longer and took the conversation to the living room.

"I honestly don't understand the appeal of that video game. Why would so many people play it?" Helen asked.

"Have you tried it, sister? It's so fun," Liz said from the side.

"You play it too?" Helen asked in surprise. "Honestly, I wanted to make Alex stop from it long ago after learning about our neighbor's son's problems. Listen to this, they forgot how to work in the fields after playing those games for so long."

"I was afraid the same thing would happen to Alex too, but the money he was bringing in was too many, and I couldn't stop. Oh god, I hope I don't regret it soon," Helen said.

"It should be fine, sister. I play those and look at me, I'm quite fine. It's just a day or two of discomfort that goes away very soon once your body gets used to the sleeping state. Maybe the new capsules are even better," Liz said.

"Hmm... maybe we should get one too," Helen thought.

"NO!" Alex exclaimed in front of everyone.

"What's wrong with you? Don't you want your parents to have fun?" Helen said with a scrutinizing face.

"Uhh... no, I mean yes. Of course, I want you guys to have fun, but maybe it's too early. Maybe you guys are right and it's bad. I don't want you guys to have problems if that's true. Besides, our internet connection isn't the greatest for you guys to play," Alex said.

"Hm... I guess you are right," Helen said after thinking for a bit. "Alright, we will wait for a bit," she said.

The family talked for a little longer until it was late afternoon.

"Alright, I will go to the town for a bit. Need to make today's shipment. Come help me load up, and see the tractor that you basically bought by yourself," Alex's father said as he stood up.

"Let me help you too brother-in-law," Hannah's father stood up and walked outside, leaving the girls alone.

Alex's father walked through the farm crossing the chickens, sheep, goats, cows, followed by a large fertile land that had many different things growing in it.

"Aren't you old by now, brother-in-law? Why don't you hire a few people to take care of this and just sit back and enjoy? With more people, the production might also increase and your profit would also go up," Hannah's father said.

"Honestly, I've thought of doing that. But nobody really wants to come out to the corner of nowhere where even the closest town is an hour away. Besides, I still have a lot of energy in me to do this all by myself," Alex's father said as he showed his body.

There was a stack of vegetables that were already packaged and just needed to be put onto the back of the delivery truck.

"There she is, the beauty," Alex's father proudly showed off a large tractor that he used on a daily basis in the land to harvest or prepare it for cropping various other things.

He seemed to be really proud of it.

#### Chapter 392: Blink of an Eye

Alex was helping his father with hauling the ingredients into the truck. Neither he nor his Uncle was strong enough to do what his father was doing.

Alex's father was basically grabbing two packages at once and lifting them without any struggle. Alex sighed as he saw that. His father really was very strong.

"God, your father scares me sometimes," his Uncle said with a chuckle.

"Scares?" Alex asked with a hint of confusion.

"Haha, when your aunt was studying at the university and we got together, she brought me back to her house to meet with her brother and your late grandparents. At that time, when I saw a hunky bodybuilder who threatened to beat me if I ever hurt his sister, I was really scared."

"I sometimes wonder if I would've really ended up with your aunt had your father not threatened me," his Uncle said while laughing to himself.

"How many times are you going to say you are afraid of me, rob?" Alex's father asked.

"Well, you are scary, brother-in-law," his Uncle laughed out loud this time.

Alex's father shook his head and laughed as well. The three continued packing all the things up. Then, Alex's father got into the truck and drove away.

"Urgh," his uncle said as he flexed himself. "That was kind of tiring. I'm not used to manual labor," he said.

"Me neither. Father rarely let me help him," Alex said.

"Haha, I don't think he ever needs help," the Uncle said. He then turned around to look at the large, infinite forest behind him.

"That thing still scares me quite a bit. Don't beasts come here from time to time?" the uncle said.

"No, there aren't any animals in there. I think all the animals have already fallen through the void by now," Alex said. Ever since he was conscious, he had never seen any animal here at all.

"Maybe they are. That would be great. It's not very good to live in constant fear from animals around here. Anyway, let's go back," the uncle said and walked back.

Alex followed behind him.

Once Alex's father returned, they all had their dinner. Helen and Liz kept on talking hour after hour while Alex's father took rob to the patio to drink some beer with him.

Rob being a businessman was used to drinking a lot, and Alex's father just didn't get drunk enough to the level of it being a problem. So, the two brothers by law drank as much as they could.

Alex sat down and took out his laptop to check what was going on. At this point, he was slightly regretting now buying another helmet, but what he said earlier was true as well. The internet speed in his house was absolutely horrendous.

He looked at different stuff online while conversing with his mother and aunt on whatever they talked about.

"You wanna tell your parents about Emily?" Hannah came up to him and softly whispered.

"Should I?" he asked. Emily and Alex had been going out for nearly two weeks now and we're pretty sure that they wanted to get together with the other person.

As long as Alex asked her to be his girlfriend, she would gladly accept at this point. Still, Alex wanted to wait until that point to introduce her to his mother.

"It's your choice," Hannah replied to his question.

"Then I'll wait," Alex said.

Hannah nodded and walked away without saying anything.

The coldness was overbearing by 9 pm, so everyone decided to retreat to their own room. Alex went back to his old bedroom and fall onto his bed.

He couldn't help but smile at the slight stiffness of the mattress, the sunken pillows, and the heavy blanket. They were all flaws, but they were flaws he loved.

He got under the blanket and tried to sleep.

As everything around the land grew quiet, a small, but the constant sound of the wind humming could be heard in the distance. Alex was used to this sound, so he just ignored it and fell asleep.

Even when all of the worlds fell asleep, the humming sound did not stop and probably never would.

Alex woke up in the morning and helped his father with his work again. It was really cold in the morning as winter was right around the corner. Just a few more weeks and winter would officially start all over the world.

After helping his father load the vehicle again, he went to the kitchen to take a warm cup of tea and relax.

There was nothing he had to read, nothing he had to watch, nothing he had to play, and nothing he had to do. This was a freedom that he hadn't felt in a while now.

The Uncle and aunt came to the kitchen to drink tea as well. Soon his mother put on a delicious breakfast that the whole family ate, praising her cooking skill once more.

His father returned from delivering for the morning as well and ate his breakfast.

It was the countryside, so there really wasn't anything to do. Thus, they just sat around, talked, played some games, walked pictures from old times, ate when it was time, and did some work here and there.

Soon, that day came to an end as well. In the blink of an eye, the 2nd day ended as well.

On the third day morning, Hannah's family and Alex had their breakfast and got ready to leave.

"Make sure to take care of yourself okay? Hannah, take care of Alex," Helen said.

"Don't worry, aunt Helen. He is old enough to take care of himself. Still, I will make sure to keep an eye on him," Hannah said and got into the car.

Helen hugged Alex once more and said her goodbyes. Alex got a little sad that he wouldn't get to see his parents for another 3 months or so.

He got into the car, and Hannah's father drove. They were now on their way back to Oakleaf City.

### Chapter 393: Gone

Hannah's father insisted on visiting her apartment, but Hannah didn't let him go there, so he had to reluctantly drive to the train station in Oakleaf city and catch a train to their home city.

Once they left, Alex and Hannah drove back to their apartment.

Emily had once more prepared a meal for them. Sarah wasn't there and was busy playing the game. They didn't get angry as they could understand her sentiment.

Once they were done eating, Hannah returned back to her room. Alex stayed around with Emily in the living room and spent the next 2 hours talking with her.

Eventually, he laid forth the idea of them becoming boyfriend and girlfriend. They liked each other and were very compatible so there was no reason to keep it dragging for any longer.

Emily was flustered for a bit, but once she settled down and thought, accepting his proposal was just a superior choice. He kissed her once again, only this time, she didn't shy away like last time.

Seeing that she was quite accepting, he kissed for far longer this time. Eventually, it was too much for Emily, so she decided to stop and made excuses to go back to her room with a red face.

Alex was very shocked himself. He couldn't believe that he had the gall to do what he had just done. However, he did not regret it in any way.

A smile appeared on his face and he made his way to his room.

"Urgh... I need to fix it if it's fixable or just throw it away," Alex thought when he saw the pile of torn-off helmet pieces on the side of his bed.

He changed his clothes to something more comfortable and got into the capsule.

He opened his eyes back in the game and sighed a little. 'So the formation is still on, huh? How long has it been? A month?' he thought.

According to Zexi, if his words were to be believed, the formation would be undone in the next few days.

So, Alex decided to follow his routine until the end. He called Pearl to train with him.

Pearl was still venturing out in the fog and came back as soon as he called for him. Pearl came running at him and as soon as he saw him, he jumped.

For a second, Alex thought Pearl was trying to attack him, but he was really just trying to get into his embrace. "Hey, are you that happy to see me talk again?" Alex said with a laugh, but then he felt slight shivering coming off from Pearl.

"Huh? What's wrong Pearl? Are you scared? Were you nervous because I left?" Alex asked.

"Meow," Pearl said, which rang in his head as 'Yes.'

"Aww, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have left you. There is no need to be nervous now; I'm here," Alex said.

Eventually, Pearl calmed down enough to train with him. After a couple of hours of training, Alex stopped and went to make some more pills of his own.

He was learning to add more than 10 ingredients now and that was incredibly hard. Not only did the entire cauldron get extremely volatile when there were more ingredients, but Alex also had a general lack of the same ingredients to compensate for his mistakes.

So, he had to be careful, and make his efforts have fruit. That was impossible when every 10th and 11th ingredient exploded the cauldron.

The most he had succeeded was a 13 ingredient recipe, and that was after nearly 30 different iterations. It was hard, and he complained a lot, but he still stuck with it at the end of the day.

For the next 4 days or so, he trained and practiced alchemy as per his routine. In this time, Pearl had grown to enter the 8th Organ Tempering realm, while he himself had entered the 6th Meridian Tempering realm.

On the 5th day, Alex was fighting with Pearl early in the morning when suddenly, something happened. While he was distracted, Pearl was able to get a hit in.

"Ow, Pearl stop," he said and looked around him. His eyes slowly changed from confusion to happiness when he realized what was happening.

"The fog is clearing up. Haha, the fog is clearing up," he said in excitement. As he watched the fog slowly started to dissipate and the open land that he was in started to shrink rapidly on itself.

As the fog disappeared, Alex could now see the barrier at it was. The fog disappeared and the space that it was occupying turned out to be nothing more than expanded space just like the one in the coliseum.

He looked down on the ground beneath his feet and found a hilt sticking out from the ground. "Finally, there you are," he said and bent down to grab it.

He wanted to see if he could pull the sword now that he was in the Meridian Establishment realm with Organ Tempering realm body.

He tried to pull hard, but it didn't budge even a little. He then pumped Qi into it in hopes of making a difference. Unlike last time when it was full of Qi, there was nothing around this time.

Even then when he pushed in the Qi, it barely stayed there for a second before it was rejected. There was no way he was going to be able to refine this sword any time soon.

So, he just poured in his Qi once more and the sword disappeared into his storage bag.

He walked over to the barrier and looked for something. He took out his True Sword and used Smiting blade to attack the barrier. The barrier was sturdy but the attack made waves that traveled along the surface of the barrier.

He kept an eye on the barrier and finally noticed something. He flew up high to a certain location on the barrier and used the Smiting blade once more.

SLAM

The barrier didn't make waves this time. This time, the barrier dissipated completely. Alex had managed to destroy the True Rank barrier formation.

#### Chapter 394: Caravan

From what Alex read about the barrier formations during his time in the library, he remembered there being written that one could destroy a barrier if they used a particularly strong attack on a weak point.

There were various ways to find the weak point of a barrier and what he had just done was one of them.

Barriers that were not sturdy made a lot of fluctuations on the surface when attacked and sometimes showed imperfections. One had to have really good knowledge about the barrier or barriers, in general, to be able to do this.

Alex didn't know much about formations, in general, to know about barriers, but he did have information about the barrier through Zexi's notes. According to the note, if the barrier had low efficiency, it could be destroyed in the same way Alex did.

Once the formation had disappeared, Alex immediately stretched his spiritual sense to the 35-meter distance so he could see everything just in case.

He ran around where the barrier was in a perimeter and found about 10 different formation flags planted there. He took all of them, as well as the ones for the spirit disorienting formation.

Once he was done, he decided to leave. He didn't know what direction he was supposed to go towards, but given that he was in a forest, he checked the sun and fully hid his body before speeding towards the north.

Just as he was about to leave, he felt something with his spiritual sense again. He checked what it was and saw that it was another formation flag.

Alex picked up the flag but didn't know where the others were placed, he checked for a few minutes and found another one, but nothing after that.

Whatever this formation was for, its job had ended a while ago.

"Hmm, I can't tell what material this is," he thought and put the flags into his storage bag. He walked further north. After killing many beasts and finding quite a few alchemy ingredients along the way for about 2 hours, he ended up finally seeing a roadway.

"I'm finally out," he thought. "Although, damn! Where am I?" he thought as he looked around.

There was no one to be seen around. He didn't even know which direction the capital was.

"I should ask for a direction towards the capital when I s—" suddenly, he heard a distant thumping. He wondered what it was and looked to his right.

Far away, he could see some movement on the road. He waited for it to come up to him. Even though the distance was quite far, the thing coming took quite a while.

As it got closer, he could see why that was.

It was a large merchant caravan that had a lot of merchandise. So it was moving very slowly. Alex waited for it to arrive next to him.

When it arrived, he saw that there were quite a few people there. Suddenly, pressure crashed on him from a True realm expert.

'What? Why is there someone like that here?' he thought.

"Who are you? And why are you blocking this road?" a voice came from above. Alex just looked up as a girl in a red robe descended from above.

The pressure was making him unable to move, but thanks to his body, it wasn't hurting at all.

"I'm just a lost person who needs direction," Alex shouted.

The girl didn't stop using the pressure and asked, "What direction?"

"I need to know the direction to the capital," he said.

Finally, the girl lowered her pressure a little and pointed behind her. "Capital is that way," she said.

"Oh, thank you. That means Scarlett City is that way right?" he asked as he pointed to the other direction.

The girl in the red robes was about to get angry when she took in all her anger and completely let go of her hostile aura. "Yes, it's that way," she said.

"Oh thank god. I will fly my way there," Alex said. "Thank you."

Suddenly the pressure stopped him again, only it wasn't trying to hurt him, only constrain him. "I don't know if you are a bandit or not, so I can't let you do that. You said you need to go to the Scarlet city right?" she asked.

Alex couldn't talk so he nodded. "Good, this caravan is going there too. You can take a ride in this caravan with me and my servant. That way I can keep an eye on you," the girl said.

"O-Okay!" Alex said. He had no other choice against a cultivator in the True Realm. 'I can't see her strength. It says mortal, but from the aura, it feels way weaker than the master. So, maybe she is in her first minor realm of the True realm,' Alex thought.

He was pulled and dragged into one of the caravan carriages where the woman was staying with her servants.

Alex looked to the inside and felt like it was a little too drab. Then he saw a girl who was looking at him.

'What's a mortal doing here?' he thought. It was very unlikely that someone could become a mortal and mingle with the cultivators, but here he was.

"Those two are my servant," the girl said and walked to the front.

Alex smiled and nodded towards the servant. The servant seemed to be with a woman who was sleeping. Alex couldn't see her first, but once he focused, he saw that the final woman that was also a mortal. He decided to ignore them and just enjoy the journey.

Along the way, he saw many things that he had missed when coming here the first time. He was always on the top of the deck of the flying boat, so it's almost impossible.

"Hello, are you alright? Do you want some water?" the servant asked after looking at Alex. Alex looked behind him and saw the girl with two glasses of water.

He took the glass and thanked the servant before moving along with his own job.

## Chapter 395: First Invasion

Alex had nothing to do, so he just sat around watching the scenery. It really was very different.

"What's your name, mister?" the servant girl asked him from the side. Ever since Alex accepted the water, she had been staying close to him. He couldn't understand if it was because her mistress said her to do so or out of her own volition.

However, he very much preferred the company of this servant girl. She was wearing a simple white dress that contrasted the stark red her mistress wore.

While the master had a haughty appearance, the servant girl looked quite soft and amicable. It was a shame that the master had more physical beauty than her.

"Yu Ming," Alex let her know with a smile.

'I wonder if her mistress is a noble,' Alex wondered. Ever since he got here, he could feel the woman with the red robes nearby, but she never came back to check upon him.

'It's almost like they're treating me like a prisoner,' he thought. However, since he was getting a free ride to Scarlet city, so he couldn't complain. 'Although, I wish I went to capital first. I needed to buy some formation blueprints and formation flags to check with my thing,' Alex thought.

He shook his head; he could do that in the Scarlet City too.

"What's your name?" Alex asked the servant girl back.

"M-my name?" the girl got a little flustered but soon calmed down. "Sorry, nobody really asks me about my name, so I got a little surprised."

"My name is Ying Wu," she said with a smile.

"What about your mistress? What's her name?" he asked.

"Oh, I dare not say my mistress's name unless she's given me permission," Wu Ying said. Alex didn't know what to say after that; the conversation came to a stop. Wu Ying then had to change the topic to bring back the conversation.

"You look quite a strong mister Yu Ming. You are a cultivator too right?" she asked.

"Yes, I am," Alex said with a smile. "I thought people close to cultivators were always cultivators. How come you're not?"

"I- We don't have that kind of luxury. I have to look after my mistress and my mother," she said.

Alex turned around to take a look at her mother who was sleeping with a slight face of anguish. "Is she fine? She seems to be in pain," Alex said.

"No, she's not fine. Although, I doubt she feels pain, however, she's been in a coma for a few years now," Ying Wu said.

Alex looked at the mother's face closely. At first, he thought he saw a hint of resemblance in her face that he recognized, but it soon faded away. Alex turned back to look at Ying Wu and was a little surprised when he saw basically no resemblance between the two.

He didn't know if he should ask that or not. However, just from his gaze, Wu Ying seemed to have understood what he was thinking and said, "She's not my biological mother. She had just been looking after me after my real mother died from a disease back in my Mistress' manor," she said.

"Oh, my condolences," Alex said.

"Thank you. That's why I want to treat her as well; I don't want to lose two mothers." Wu Ying's face got incredibly sad when he thought that. He could genuinely feel the amount of love this girl had for the woman over there.

Regardless of if she was his mother or not, he was sure that she loved her dearly.

"Have you not gone to the doctors yet?" he asked.

"I have, but they didn't know what was wrong with her," Ying Wu said with a sad face.

"Maybe they could've helped if you stayed in the capital a little longer," Alex said.

"Maybe they could have. Unfortunately, we had to leave," she said.

Alex thought of something and asked, "Did your mistress force you to take your mother away from the capital?"

He felt that the master was quite rude to him, so it was possible she was actually a bad person in general and forced her servants away from the capital just because she wanted to move away.

"Oh no no, mistress tried her best to get my mother treated. However, we couldn't live there after the beast attacks," Ying Wu said.

"Oh, right," he said. He shook his head as he realized he was thinking negatively of the Mistress. 'Stop judging people by how they show themselves off. For all you know, it could be the mistress that's genuinely helpful, and the servant that's a disguised liar,' he told himself.

However, not everything had to be the opposite of what they seemed either. A person could be good on the outside and be good on the inside as well.

Alex refrained from making judgments for people quite quickly.

"The beast attack was really harsh, wasn't it?" Alex said while sighing to himself.

"Oh, you were there?" the girl asked.

"Yes, I was in the Annual competition a month ago. After the beasts suddenly attacked and I went to go help the people, it certainly was a bad time. So many people died, more were injured, sigh," Alex sighed once more.

Maybe that was one of the reasons his master didn't come searching for him. Maybe they thought he died during the beast attack. He hoped they didn't and kept searching for him.

However, it was impossible for them to search so far away from the city either. They wouldn't have expected him to get taken away here.

"So that's why you are moving away huh? I thought in the month's time, the city would've been built back up. It seems the Cardinal city might fall at this rate," Alex said.

"Cardinal City was the main target of the beasts, so during the first invasion, most of the beasts focused only on the Cardinal city. If it wasn't for the competition, the city would've ended in a disaster," Wu Ying said with a sad voice.

Alex suddenly stood up straight and looked her in the eyes as he asked, "What do you mean... the first invasion?"

Chapter 396: City

"What do you mean... by the first invasion?" Alex asked confused and a little worried.

"Um, what else could I mean? The first invasion, the one from a month ago. The one we were just talking about," Ying Wu said.

"Yes I understand that, but the fact that you call it 'the first invasion' implies that there was another one," Alex asked nervously.

Ying Wu made a weird look. "Don't you know? There was an invasion just a few days ago," she said.

"What?" Alex exclaimed. "There was another invasion?" He was surprised. 'Wasn't I supposed to know when the invasions occurred? Was that time just a coinci—'

"When exactly did it occur?" he asked.

"Like 5 or 6 days ago," Ying Wu said.

'Damn, It must've been during the time I went back home,' Alex thought. He couldn't know if he felt it or not, but he definitely missed it if he did.

"The sects are all back to their cities right? Is the Capital still okay?" he asked.

"Oh, no need to worry about that. Like I said, the first invasion was truly the strongest. The second one had strong beasts but not strong enough to give F— fighters any problem," she said.

"Apparently the attacks in the other cities were weak as well, so most of the cities are fine. However, due to the first strong attack on the capital, Mistress got worried that the beasts had someone intelligent amongst them and would come to attack the city with greater amount again," Ying Wu said.

"So the attacks are everywhere huh? Are the other cities doing well?" He asked.

"Oh yeah, most cities can handle the beasts even with a non-combat sect. It's the small villages around the empire that are facing the most problems. However, most of them aren't near the forest already, so it's mostly fine," Ying Wu said.

Alex started to worry a little about his sect. 'Did master not come search for me as much because she learned about what happened back in the city?' he thought.

"Yeah, so you see. It's better to take my mother out of there, despite it having some of the best doctors and Alchemist," she said.

"Oh, and where are you taking her?" he asked.

"I heard there is a good alchemy sect in Scarlet City, so we were thinking of taking her there," Ying Wu said.

"Oh, I'm from the Hong Wu sect. If you need any help, just use my name," Alex said.

The two talked for a while until night fell. However, the caravan still kept ongoing. Alex didn't dare cultivate around people that he didn't trust just yet, so all he did was think about the various things he had learned about alchemy.

Early morning, right before it was time for him to leave, he heard movements. Ying Wu opened her eyes as well, and soon there was a commotion outside the caravan.

"BEAST HOARD!" somebody shouted.

Alex immediately ran outside, but the woman with the red robe stepped in. "You don't move," she said. Alex wanted to help the people, but he didn't want to go against what the woman said.

Then he saw various cultivators walk out of different compartments of the caravan and start to fight the beasts. The beasts weren't weak, but they were easily overwhelmed by the True realm cultivator.

'I can't wait until I get that strong,' he thought. The woman in red was nothing more than a blur as she moved from left to right killing all the beasts with a single slice of her daggers.

"Wow, your mistress is so fast," Alex said.

"She's not bad," Ying Wu said with a smile.

Despite his willingness to help, it seemed that they didn't need to help at all. "YAWN.... I'm going back to sleep. What about you, mister? Oh,? cultivators don't need to sleep right? We mortals sometimes forget," Ying Wu said and went to sleep.

Alex logged out and went to eat with the girls. He quickly logged back and watched the morning scenery again. The caravan had already diverted down a path away from the southern forest, so they wouldn't have to worry about the forests again.

It was along the side of a mountain that was about as tall as the mountains in the Hong Wu sect. Once they crossed the mountain, they saw a small city. It took them 2 hours to go down the mountain to the city.

"We will stop here for the next 4 hours. Please feel free to go around the city, but do return in the next 4 hours. The caravan will leave with or without you," the owner of the caravan spoke out loud.

Alex wanted to leave and check out the town but the woman in the red dress intervened. "Where are you going?" she asked.

"Uhh... to the city?" Alex answered.

"Do you plan on returning?" she asked.

"Of course, I have to return back to my sect," Alex said.

The woman in the red dress waited for a few seconds, and then surprisingly stepped aside. "Come back in time," she said and walked into the room.

Alex was a little stunned that she allowed him to enter. However, he soon forgot about her and walked into the city to buy a few things. The first thing he did was buy formation blueprints and information on them.

He then bought a few more basic formation plates that he would need to try out on. He also bought a book that taught the most basic of formations that he could use as an anchor to learning about formations as a whole and the more advanced knowledge that was in his mind.

He also bought a pen that was a tip made up of a really sharp crystal tip. This was called an Inscription pen and was used to make cuts in a formation plate to carve the formations.

There were also various types of pens of different shapes and sizes. Alex chose the one that looked average as he was just starting to learn about formations.

Once he was done, he left that shop.

#### Chapter 397: Base Formations

Alex roamed the city for a few more hours before returning back to the caravan. The woman in red let him enter without questioning anything and she herself stayed outside.

"Oh, Brother Yu Ming, you're back. How was the city? Was it good?" Ying Wu asked as soon as he returned.

"It was okay; it couldn't compare to the Cardinal City, however," he said.

"I doubt any city can compare to the Cardinal City," Ying Wu said.

Alex spoke for a bit and went to his corner before taking out a talisman. He was about to read it when it was suddenly ripped away from his hands and fell into the hands of the woman in red.

She quickly checked the talisman and returned it back.

"What was that?" he thought, but the woman would never say anything. 'Does she still think I'm a criminal and will harm the people in this caravan?' he wondered.

He forgot about it and checked the formation information in his hand. He slowly read it all and finished in about 30 minutes.

He put down the talisman and thought, 'so that's how it is. No wonder I didn't understand so much of the information,' he thought.

As he knew, formations were made run using different patterns. One could make that pattern by carving into a specific metal plate, or through connections of Qi that were made using a metal rod with a specially made cloth as a transmitter for the Qi.

Every single pattern in a formation was made up of multiple straight lines forming a symmetrical shape. Each of the single straight lines was called a stroke.

Strokes were what made the formation. You could have a formation when the strokes reached a pattern that could do something when energy was put into it.

Even if the metal plate was wrong and the formation itself didn't work, as long as the pattern was something that could be used, one would know by its absorption of their Qi.

Formations were ranked in two different ways. One was a ranking based on strokes and another was a ranking based on the number of individual patterns that were joined to create a formation.

For strokes, any formation that had less than 5 strokes wasn't even considered a proper formation.

From 5 to 10 strokes, the formation was called a Common Formations or Base Formations

From 11 to 30 strokes, the formation was called a True Formations.

From 31 to 60 strokes, the formation was called a Saint Formations.

Above 60, the formation was likely called an Immortal formation, however, no one was sure of that as making that many strokes for a formation were night impossible.

Similarly, one could use different base formations to put together a formation that brought together two formations to do something entirely different.

With 2 or 3 base formations, the formation would become a True Formation as well, and with 4, 5, or 6 base formations, the formation would become a Saint formation.

Higher ranked formations weren't known to use more than 4 patterns base formations, which were just simple base patterns.

Alex already knew the pattern for 2? base formations on his own. One was the Fire formation that he used to create fire for the alchemy. The second one was the communication formation that he discovered along with the fire formation.

He didn't know what that one did however aside from just doing some... communication.

He took out another base formation that he had just bought and started studying it. He had the Qi and energy source for activation, he had the metal plate for carving, and the pattern was a simple one that he could remember with just a single glance.

He took out the inscription pen he had bought and started carving. The caravan still hadn't moved so it was prime time to try it. The woman in red appeared right next to him but didn't disturb him.

He slowly carved the formation on the metal plate with one stroke at a time. He made sure each stroke he made was straight and without any ragged edges.

That was quite hard to do when you were not really knowing of formations but he still tried. The inscription pen was truly amazing. Instead of cutting away metal, it felt like the tip was simply removing what was already cut.

The cutting was super smooth and he didn't make a single mistake, or at least it seemed so to him. He felt like he had followed the blueprint to perfection.

He blew on it softly to throw away any remaining metal dust that was on the plate and looked at it.

This base formation had 7 strokes that were placed in a weird formation. Since the formation was done, he took out a spirit stone and placed it at the base.

He slowly breathed in and out getting ready to activate it. At the same time, the woman in the red robes walked over to the opposite side blocking his view towards Ying Wu and her mother.

"You made a formation?" she asked.

"Yes," Alex said.

"I heard you were an Alchemist though, how are you making formations?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm just starting. This is my second formation only," Alex said.

The woman looked at him with a scrutinizing eye. Then she said, "give me the information about this formation."

Alex handed it, and she read it for a few seconds. "Alright, try it out. If it does anything other than what is written in this talisman, you will have to suffer punishment," she said.

Alex sighed and ignored her. He then pointed his fingers towards the metal plate. Slowly, Qi was released from his fingers which flew all the way to the formation.

It entered the carvings and slowly filled it up. Once every single nook and corner of the pattern was filled, the Qi penetrated through the metal plate and made contact with the spirit stone on the other side.

Right in front of his and the woman's eyes, the formation activated.

#### Chapter 398: Copying the Chip

Alex and the woman in red robes watched as the formation activated. Suddenly, a gust of air appeared out of nowhere and blew both of their hair.

It was a steady breeze that one would appreciate on a hot summer day.

Alex smiled and said, "It works."

"Good job," the woman said and walked outside.

'This mistress is very weird; what is up with her?' Alex wondered.

"Show me! Show me!" Ying Wu came forward and looked at the formation. The continuous gust of air hit her as well when she came next to it.

"Oh wow! Formations really are such weird stuff," she said with a massive sign in her eyes.

"Are you interested in formations?" Alex asked.

"N-Not really," she answered as she got a bit flustered. "It's not like I can use it even if I was interested."

"How about you try?" Alex said and handed her the talisman with the blueprint to the formation.

Ying Wu took the talisman and was about to place it on her forehead when she stopped and made an uncomfortable smile. "Umm... mortals can't read these can they?" she asked.

Alex realized what he was doing and immediately apologized. He then just gave the formation he had made without the spirit stone attached and made her carve it.

Once he handed the inscription pen, she started.

She carefully carved with her weirdly normal hands that didn't seem to do any work. Her speed was very nonuniform and it looked like she was struggling to carve it properly.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

"Ughh... Y-Yeah," she said while clearly struggling to do a single stroke properly.

"Umm... You don't have to do it if you can't," Alex said.

"I'm doing it... Ugh, I just didn't realize that carving metal would be so hard," she said. She was struggling, but she didn't want his help.

Alex waited by the side. Thankfully, those plates only cost a gold coin, or he would be crying right now. Eventually, just before the caravan moved, she finished.

"Phew, I did it," she said as she handed him both of the formations back. Alex looked at the formation of his that looked close to pristine, without a single imperfection. And then he looked at hers.... And the most humane way to describe it would be a cheap imitation.

None of the strokes were of correct length neither were they straight. There were dents and scratched all over the strokes too.

The pattern was also not very accurate, but it was close enough.

"C'mon, let's try it," she said.

Alex nodded and pulled out a spirit stone before trying it on her formation. As soon as it was activated, a small gust of air appeared that surprised Alex, however, just as suddenly, it disappeared.

The formation didn't work.

"I'm afraid it wasn't good enough," Alex said.

"What? No way? But I tried so hard," Ying Wu said.

"Yeah, but sometimes hard work is not all are important. You also need skill and luck," Alex said.

Ying Wu pouted and left him alone. Alex shook his head and went back to studying formations.

Unfortunately, he couldn't do a lot this time as the caravan had started moving again, so he couldn't make any more formations at all. On the upside, it seemed that the merchants in the caravan had made a lot of sales in the last 4 hours, so the caravan itself would move at a quicker pace.

Alex remembered the rough map his master has shown him months ago and calculated that it would only take him a little more than 2 days to reach the Scarlet City.

He couldn't practice formations, so he stuck to the theoretical stuff. 'I need to get the chip formation here and try it,' thought.

He took out a talisman and closed his eyes to 'think'. At the same time, he logged out and got the chip from the table. He went back into the capsule and looked at the chip once before logging in.

He started drawing onto the talisman that he saw. Once he made as much as he could remember, he went back out again to look for more.

Logging out and logging back in. He did it nearly a dozen times; each time acting like he was thinking hard and then writing it down.

Finally, after 15 or so minutes, he finished it. He put the talisman on his forehead and checked it once more.

"Yes, it's all here," he thought. "Alright, let's see if I can really not find anything now."

He started learning the chip formation as much as he could. The very first and most surprising thing he noticed that simply blew him away was the number of strokes.

"Holy... that's 145 strokes. Huh? Is this really not a formation?" he thought. 145 was simply too big of a number for it to possibly be a formation that was possible normally.

'However, even though the chances are slim, there could be one with this many strokes. It's symmetrical, has straight strokes, and is carved on a metal plate,' Alex thought.

He started comparing the formation against many other base formations he had just bought, but it was too hard to derive information from a bunch of lines that looked like it could technically make up all the patterns in the world.

'Which ones are real, and which ones are not?' he wondered.

He continued studying the formation as long as he could. From time to time, he tried to make some formations, but unfortunately, the bumpy roads just didn't let that happen.

Ning fell and he still studied formations. Ying Wu made some liquid that she fed her mother and herself ate a very small portion.

She went to sleep next to her mother and was soon asleep. Alex was a little disappointed that he didn't get to cultivate right now, so he focused on the formations once more.

Just as he was about to study, however, the caravan abruptly stopped, causing many people to be awakened. Then, someone cried out loud.

"BANDITS!!!"

Chapter 399: Vermin

"BANDITS!!!"

Alex suddenly stood up and ran to the door of the carriage he was on. The mistress in red was already out and had a small sword on her hands.

The caravan was currently going through a large jungle that was not part of the southern forest. Thus, there weren't strong beasts here. However, that also made it the prime spot for bandits to attack.

He looked around and saw a commotion in the front; People had already started fighting. He could hear clashes of swords and spears from the front. He decided to go help them.

"Stop!" the woman in red stopped him.

Alex got a little agitated this time. Not even letting him help the people in such a time irked him the wrong way. "What?" he asked annoyed.

"Stay back here and protect the back. The front is likely just a distraction. The ones who will do the looting will come from the back," the woman said.

Just as she said that Alex could hear rustles from the tree side next to him. 'Oh, so she is not stopping me,' he thought. He was surprised.

5 people appeared on his side. The woman had already left to the other side to fight the ones that would come from the other side.

He looked at the men, a little scared, and saw that 3 of them held sabers, one of them had a bow and arrow and the final one had a spear with him.

Alex got a little worried. However, he soon realized that the bandits didn't have a very high cultivation base. 3 of them were in the Meridian tempering realm, and 2 of them were in the organ tempering realm.

This was going to be an easy fight. He took out one of the common swords and got ready to fight.

The current bandits were not very strong and couldn't harm him at all, especially with the True armor he was wearing. Thus he decided to use this opportunity as a test to see if his month-long self-training in the sword really helped him in any way.

He was still using the concealing technique, so the bandits couldn't see his cultivation base at all. Thus, they thought he was very weak.

The man with the bow shot an arrow towards him. Alex simply blocked the arrow with his sword and moved forward to attack the closest bandit that was using a saber.

He lifted the sword just a tiny amount, trying not to use excessive movements that could give openings for the bandits to attack. He immediately struck down which the bandit blocked.

Alex then slid his sword along the blade of the opponent's saber until he hit the hilt, and then twisted the sword until it was knocked out of that man's hands. The saber flew far back towards the forest.

'That's one saber down— '

The man suddenly brought out a sword from his storage bag and attacked. Another man attacked at the same time, and Alex had to block with his sword.

He then twisted his sword again to knock them back and parried the spear attack that nearly hit his chest.

'I need to be careful. They're going for the kill,' he thought. He decided to get a little more serious.

Another arrow flew at him. He could dodge it, but there were Ying Wu and her mother behind him, so he needed to protect them.

He hit the arrow away and attacked again. He consciously made no use of any techniques and just attacked with his sword.

The bandits did soon resort to using different techniques, but from what he could see, these small-time bandits couldn't use strong skills. What they did use posed no problems to Alex.

He quickly struck down the first bandit with the flat side of his sword. He then fought the guy with the spear and incapacitated him as well.

The other two bandits tried, but they too failed against him; they just weren't strong enough. For the guy with the bow and arrow, it wasn't even a fight.

All the bandits were down on the ground unable to move.

"That wasn't so bad, but I need a stronger opponent to really see how far I've come along," he thought.

The bandits lay on the ground, grunting in pain. The commotion at the front had ended and it seemed the bandits had run away.

"What are you doing?" a voice spoke behind him. Alex was a little surprised and made some distance, but then he saw that it was only Ying Wu.

"Oh, you scared me. I thought there was somebody strong behind me and I couldn't sense them," he said. Alex hadn't dealt with a mortal ever in the game and didn't realize how sneaky they could be.

Ying Wu looked at the bandits and asked, "these are the bandits right? Didn't you defeat them?"

"Of course I did, just look at them," he said pointing at the bandits on the ground.

"Why are you outside!?" the woman in red suddenly came to their side and practically shrieked.

"I-I'm sorry. I'll go back in," Ying Wu said and left.

The woman then looked at Alex and the bandits and then asked, "You haven't dealt with them yet?"

"Huh? Yes, i—"

The woman immediately swung her sword, scaring Alex. However, he was not the target of the attack. A white light escaped from her sword and cut the bandits that were on the ground.

Right in front of Alex's eyes, all 5 bandits were killed just like that.

Alex's heart skipped a beat and he fought the urge to vomit. These people, that were possible real people in a real-world, died just like that.

He had clearly taken care of the bandits but the woman went a step further and killed them.

"Why are you soft with the bandits? They're bandits! One of them left alive is a hundred innocent dead in the future. They are the vermin of the empire. If you find them, kill them."

#### Chapter 400: Judgement and Morality

Alex stayed on the side of the carriage with his head drooped down. Just moments prior he had seen the corpses of the men just thrown away into the jungle.

Even the one attacking at the front had a few of themselves killed and they were thrown aside like that as well.

Kill.

He had made up his mind to kill any who could harm him. It was half made by him because he didn't want to reincarnate in the game, and half made because that was what he was told to do by his master.

He had killed 2 people by now. One was a clone, an already dead person that was being used by someone sinister to torture people from his sect.

And his death had been an accident.

The second one was somebody strong that wanted to use his power to have some things of his for himself. He went so far as to even nearly kill him to get the things he wanted.

And his death was something that technically happened as an accident as well.

Were they both bad people? Yes.

Did they deserve to die? Yes.

If he knew where their fate was going, would he have tried to change it? No.

Did he kill them? ... Maybe.

Alex still wasn't sure if the two people he did kill could even be called killing. One was a dead man walking and another was killed by something inside of him.

One could argue that neither of these men was killed by Alex. Even if argued the opposite, Alex was fine with it.

They were bad people and they deserved to die.

Were the bandits bad people who deserved to die? Yes.

"Then why am I feeling so bad?" He asked himself. "Am I feeling sympathy for them? No. I know they are bad people, but then why?"

The caravan moved along. He however still kept thinking back to the bandits that were killed.

"Is it because I now believe they are real people?" He thought.

He had hit the problem on its head. He had come to terms with killing, but that was only in the 'game'. There was no way he was ever going to kill people in real life.

Now that he believed the game to be real life as well, he was having a problem coming to terms with killing people.

Did someone really deserve to die just because they were bad?

Just moments earlier, Alex would've said yes to the question without thinking. But now that he realized what he truly believed regarding this world, his sense of judgement also followed his perception of the world.

If this world was real, then he would use his real-world morality here as well.

Did bad people deserve to die? No.

Then was he wrong in causing the death of the two that he killed?

There came the dilemma once more. He believed they deserve to die. There was not a single sense of guilt he felt for the two that he killed.

Given another chance, he would do the same. This opinion of his hadn't changed despite the fact that he was now aware of his perception of the world.

"Then how come I am okay with killing them, but can't think of myself as capable of killing the bandits? They are all bad people, so shouldn't it be the same for everyone?"

Just as he asked those questions, he realized something.

"Maybe it isn't; Maybe it doesn't have to. Why should I treat someone that treated me wrong on the same level as someone that treats other people wrong, but has never interacted with me?"

"It's natural that I hold contempt for people that have wronged me on a much personal level than the ones who did me no wrong."

"I don't have to feel bad about not killing bad people. At the same time, I don't have to feel bad about them dying as well."

"If I kill those who I think are bad, but then feel bad when others kill who they think are bad, then aren't I just a hypocrite?" He thought.

He then thought of something.

"Just because it's a real-world, should I bring my judgements based on another world? I felt bad because they were real. But that doesn't mean they didn't deserve it."

"People who do bad get killed in this world, that is the rule of this world. People who do bad get put in prison, that is the rule of my real world."

"Both of them are right in their own ways. I shouldn't let my morality that was set in another world askew my sense of judgement in another."

"If I feel like they deserve death at my hand, I'll kill them. If I feel like they don't, then I will do what I think is right at that time."

He finally looked up with a resolute face like a man who had overcome his inner demons. He would no longer be swayed into thinking one way or another based on what other people thought.

He had his own sense of morality and judgement and would act based on that. That way, he wouldn't be guilty of anything he did.

"Bandits!!" People screamed once more. Alex walked out leisurely. There were people protecting the front of the caravan, so he only had to stay around for the back.

Bandits came once again and he fought them again. These bandits were much weaker than the ones before.

So, he easily defeated them. Then, he did what his judgement told him to do.

Bring the bad people to the good people who had their own sense of judgement.

When the woman in red saw that he was dragging the beaten up bandits towards her, she frowned.

"What are you doing?" She asked.

"I don't feel strongly about them enough to do the killing. so you do it," he said and left them there before walking away.

He could hear the bandits being cut to pieces but felt nothing in his heart whatsoever.

He would no longer let the world tamper with his sense of morality. He would refine it on his own.