

Alchemy 471

Chapter 471 - Bing Li

Alex walked up to the registering area and queued up. He waited for a while before it was his turn.

"Hello elder, is the 3rd rank still Bing Li?" he asked.

The elder was a little surprised, but when he saw who was asking, he understood. "Yes, it's her. Don't tell me you want to directly go for Bing Li?" he asked.

Alex smiled and nodded. The elder just shook his head and registered the fight. Bing Li was the 4th ranked disciple of the sect, and after Luo Mei's absence, she rose up the rank of 3rd by simply challenging the empty rank of 3rd.

Now, Alex was going to take that rank from her and then go to Du Yuhan to learn about sword intents.

He wasn't sure how long he would have to wait, so he went around the sect crater looking through the different kinds of stuff.

On his walk, he once again came across the Black stele. The rock didn't shine with any light as the sun was starting to set and there wasn't enough light around him. Still, it looked as majestic as ever.

'Should I try once more?' he thought. He was after all in the mind tempering realm now and that meant his mind was a little stronger than before, as well as having a little larger spiritual sea.

'Let's try,' he thought as he got ready and sent out his spiritual sense once again. Just as the spiritual sense reached the text on the black stele, something crept up his connection with the spiritual sense and tried to enter his mind again.

Alex quickly shut off his connection once again before even half of his spiritual sea was empty.

"Damn," he thought. "Still no other information. I will need to have a stronger mind."

He left the place and went back to stage 1 to wait for his opponent to arrive. He had to wait around for nearly 2 hours before someone other than him responded to him being called.

He walked up the stage and saw a white-haired girl climb up on the other side. She was a little shorter than Alex and had a cold expression on her face.

The moment she reached the stage, she gave an angry look towards Alex and got ready to fight. From her storage bags, she pulled out a white rod of some sort.

'Does she fight with a staff by some chance?' Alex thought while he prepared himself. He realized that his opponent's cultivation base was in the 3rd Mind Tempering realm, just like Yang Ma, but she was most likely weaker than him.

Alex couldn't decide if he should fight bare-handed or use his sword, so he took out a common sword just in case. He didn't know what the rod could do, so he had to stay ready.

"FIGHT!"

The moment the elder gave the go, Bing Li started pouring her Qi into the rod. Alex could see a light blue outline creeping up and from the center of the rod where she held it.

Suddenly, the rod started deforming and started getting flatter and more flexible. A line separated from the middle and soon Alex realized what it actually was.

'A bow?' he was surprised. He was getting ready for close combat between a sword and a staff, but it turned out that it was going to be different.

Immediately, the girl pulled the string of the bow, and light coalesced on her bow as it soon turned to a light blue arrow.

She immediately let it loose and the elemental arrow flew towards Alex. Alex struck the arrow with his sword to stop it, however, instead of being blocked like a normal arrow, the light blue arrow simply disappeared in a burst of light that sprinkled all over Alex.

Bing Li made a fist and suddenly the floating motes of blue light converged towards Alex and started freezing him.

Alex tried to move away, but the lights quickly followed him and soon fully froze him over. He looked like an ice statue completely.

The girl looked at the fight and made a 'hmph' sound, thinking he got what he deserved for looking down on her.

She was about to celebrate her victory when the ice cracked all over and Alex walked out.

"That's a really interesting ability," Alex said as he was completely unphased by the attack. He even had a smile on his face.

The girl immediately picked up her bow again and pulled the string once more to shoot the same shot.

Alex knew he couldn't stop it, so he dodged the attack. However, just as it was going past him, she once again made a fist and the arrow burst into lights of motes once again and converged on him.

Alex created some fire and started burning everything around him. The fire quickly took care of the light.

Without even turning back, he hit the incoming arrow with his sword and then drowned the with fire.

"So you have an ice-type mutated spiritual root huh?" Alex asked. He was surprised to see something so different here.

"Why would you care? Just fight," Bing Li said.

"Sure," Alex said, and immediately his sword started burning red.

Bing Li understood what was going to happen so she quickly moved her hands and light blue Qi released from them to quickly form an ice barrier in front of her as well as ice armor on herself.

Ice was a sub-type of Water, so if Alex used his most certainly weaker Fire elemental attack, he would definitely not succeed in this confrontation... was what Bing Li believed.

However, she had no idea how dense his Qi was.

Alex slashed his sword without hesitation and it flew right up to the barrier and crushed it at once. It blocked most of the attack but the remainder that reached her armor also managed to put some sort of damage on the armor.

She was so surprised by the turn of events that she didn't even realize that a sword had already appeared next to her throat.

She looked up in fear and barely managed to say, "I concede."

Chapter 472 - Fifth Elder's Disciple

It was late at night, but the smile on Alex's face was as bright as ever. He looked at the badge on his hand and the rank 3 written on it.

He was excited like a little child whose parents just bought him his favorite new toy he had seen on TV.

'Yes! Finally, the damn rank is mine,' he thought. He would've certainly got this rank a few weeks ago, but then he suddenly had to take a detour and go heal his sister's father.

However now, he finally got to fight as he wished and got the rank he wanted.

He didn't even waste time walking as he ran up the side of the crater and very quickly reached Du Yuhan's house.

He walked up to the door and knocked on it. He waited for a while and Du Yuhan finally showed up, slowly opening the door.

Du Yuhan put on an annoyed face when he saw Alex's face once again.

"Why is it always you? Can't you leave me al—"

His words were cut short when Alex simply put up the badge close to his face. Du Yuhan saw the number 3 on the badge and shut up.

His annoyed face immediately turned serious as he looked at Alex and asked, "You really got it?"

"Yes," Alex said with a sense of pride.

Du Yuhan was still a little skeptical, so he took out a talisman and communicated with someone through it. He soon got an answer and his skepticism vanished, leaving only a surprised expression on his face.

"You really did beat little Bing? That's quite surprising," he said. "However, If you can defeat Bing Li, then you should be close to Yang Ma too. Why don't you go for him as well?"

Alex shook his head. "That's my sister's rank, I don't need to take it back for her, she can do it herself. I only needed to take the 3rd spot so you can teach me Sword Intent," Alex said. "So, are you ready to teach me now?"

Du Yuhan sighed and said, "Yeah, I promised, so I won't be going back on my word. However, it's already nighttime, do we really have to practice right now?"

"I usually like to practice at night. If that's not okay with you then we can change it to morning or evening," Alex said.

"No, the time is fine, but what about training ground? You know we can't make much noise when others are cultivating right?" Du Yuhan said.

"Oh, don't worry about that," Alex said. "I know a place."

* * * * *

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

A young man had his eyes closed inside a room in a core disciple's house.

The young man was tall and had a very well-built body. He had short, spiky green hair which a face that couldn't be called anything but handsome.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

The knocks kept coming from the door. Not only that, his storage bag was buzzing too. However, he didn't move at all.

After a few minutes, the young man finally opened his eyes and sighed. "I shouldn't play this game for so long. I nearly died of hunger," he thought.

He then realized his talisman was buzzing. "Hm... who's calling me?" he wondered and picked up the talisman.

Just then his door was knocked on once more.

"Who's outside?" he wondered and stood up while looking at his talisman. The message was from his master who told him to come and meet him as soon as he could.

'That idiot is calling me? He never calls me anymore after telling me to hide from the public eye as much as I can,' he thought.

He took out his badge and put it on the wooden block next to the door. The door opened and suddenly someone pushed it open from outside to walk in.

"Huh? O— Master, what are you doing here?" he was surprised to see his master, the 5th elder here. "I thought you wanted me to meet you at your place."

"That was over an hour ago," the fifth elder said in an annoyed voice.

'The hell is wrong with this idiot?' the disciple thought.

"Are you aware of what has happened in the sect?" the fifth elder asked.

"Uh... no, I was cultivating," he said.

"The Sect Leader's disciple is back and took the 3rd rank. He defeated someone in the 3rd Mind Tempering realm," the fifth elder said.

"So? That's not hard at all," the disciple said.

"Tha- that's not hard?" the elder said with an astounding face. "How high is your cultivation base to—"

Finally, he checked his disciple's cultivation base and suddenly shut up. "S-so high?" he said in surprise.

"Of course it is," the disciple said. "You told me to cultivate in secret. This is what I've been doing all this time."

"Bu-But you were just at the start of Meridian Tempering realm not 2 months ago," the elder said.

'Yeah, well I would've been much higher if my parents let me play it as much as I wanted. Now that I've got my own place, I was able to finally cultivate without all the nagging,' he thought.

"So, what are you doing here, master? It can't be that you want me to take down this sect leader's disciple right?" he asked.

"What? Yes, that's what i—"

The fifth elder lost his train of thought again as he checked his disciple's cultivation base once again. 'How is this possible?' he couldn't help but think.

The disciple scoffed at his master's dumbfounded face and said, "So you want me to go challenge him tomorrow?"

The fifth elder was still a little distracted, but he quickly gathered his thoughts and looked back towards his disciple.

"I did come here to see if you could challenge him but turns out you are far stronger now than I had imagined. So... change of plans," the fifth elder said.

"You have someone else to challenge."

The disciple got curious as well.

"Who?"

Chapter 473 - Learning About Sword Intent

Alex and Du Yuhan walked into the training hall behind Wen Cheng's manor. Alex had asked Wen Cheng for permission to use this building and Wen Cheng had allowed him to use it without a second thought.

"There was something like this here all the time?" Du Yuhan asked in surprise. He had been training in the Training hall where he would have to pay an hourly fee. Even though it was mostly discounted for him due to him being at Rank 2, it still cost him quite a few in total.

"Yes, this is where I've been practicing for a while now," Alex said.

Du Yuhan didn't speak after that and simply looked around. "You don't have to worry about breaking the walls or making too much noise. The walls can handle even True realm attacks and the whole hall is sound-proof, so no one will hear us train outside," Alex said.

Du Yuhan nodded and brought out a common sword. Alex smiled seeing that he was ready and brought out his own common sword.

Du Yuhan stopped and asked, "Don't you have a better sword?"

Alex was confused and said, "I do. Why?"

"Then take it out. It can't be that you want to fight with that right?" he asked.

"Huh, but that's what you are doing," Alex said.

"Don't try to copy me; You are not me. Every person is different, every intent is different. Someone might have more intentions about attacking, some might have more intentions about defending. Everyone is different, and their weapon intent manifests differently."

"It's quite unnoticeable at Sword Intent, but when Sword Qi appears, you can start seeing your own personality into the Qi. My intent is to cut down everything and make my way to the top, and so my Sword Qi manifests to defeat everyone. Yours might be different than mine."

"So you should stop copying and try to find some on your own," Du Yuhan said.

"So... I have to find my own form of Sword Intent?" Alex asked.

"Something like that," Du Yuhan said. "First of all, stop using the bad swords. The first part of having a sword intent is to have the sword and the person be one. If you use different swords each time, how can you ever truly become one?"

"The fact that you can use sword intent means that you already have the correct mindset. Now you just need the correct sword to go along with it," Du Yuhan said.

Alex felt enlightened about something he hadn't thought of before. But then he thought of something else.

"Wait, then that means that... you have a proper sword too," Alex said.

"Of course. But it's a little different for me. I put in twice the effort as anyone would need to. I first put in all my effort to learn the sword with a common sword, and then move on to my proper one and learn it all over again."

"That way, I can not only put in more practice for the same thing, I can also slowly understand my own sword better and better," Du Yuhan said.

"Then the reason you never pulled out your true sword in the competition was that?" Alex asked.

"Those people in the competition were not worth me putting in that much effort. If I could win against them at my worst, then I saw no reason to do my best in front of them," he said.

Alex's eyes went wide when he realized that he was most likely looking at the strongest person in the empire that was not in the True realms. He could only imagine what sort of name Du Yuhan would make for himself once he truly got to shine.

"Take out your sword," he said.

Alex nodded and kept away his common sword before taking out his Steel sword.

Du Yuhan looked at the sword and nodded. "Good sword," he said. "Let's start."

"Wait," Alex said. "One moment."

Du Yuhan looked with a confused face as Alex took a deep breath and started taking in all of his cultivation bases.

Finally, once no more aura remained, Alex got into his fighting stance and said, "Ready."

"What? No. Why did you take in your cultivation base when we are just going to start our training?" Du Yuhan asked.

"Eh? You won't use Sword Qi, right?" Alex asked instead.

"Of course not. That is dangerous," he said.

"Yeah," Alex said. "Same thing. If I use my cultivation base, then it's dangerous for you. Don't mind it though, It won't be a detriment in our fight at all."

Alex got into position and his sword slowly started glowing white.

"Well, if you have a death wish then I can't help you there," he said as he held his sheathed blade next to him. "However, it does seem you've improved quite well on your own as well."

"Thanks," Alex said and immediately charged forward. He slashed straight in front of him and tried to hit Du Yuhan.

CLANG

A sound appeared out of nowhere when Du Yuhan's sword clashed with Alex's, blocking his sword on the spot.

Alex was beyond surprised when he realized that he couldn't see Du Yuhan unsheathe his sword. The single motion of pulling out his blade, swinging at Alex, and hitting his sword was so smooth that it didn't even register in his mind.

At the same time, Du Yuhan was quite surprised as well. Given that Alex had no cultivation base at the moment, he expected the sword to escape from his hands and fly away. Yet, the sword remained right where it was in his hand, and Alex didn't even look the least bit hurt.

Du Yuhan started getting confused before a possible answer started appearing in his mind. "You're a body cultivator?" he asked.

Alex had no reason to hide that anymore as anyone who had seen him fight in the fighting hall would have made such a guess by now.

"Yes," he said.

"Interesting," Du Yuhan said, finally showing a curious face. "It seems that you really weren't lying when you said you were stronger than me with your cultivation."

"Finally I feel more interested in teaching you."

Chapter 474 - Surprise

Alex already knew how to use Sword Intent. All that was left was fine-tuning what he did know to the extreme to make the most use of it.

After that, he could finally start thinking about Sword Qi, which even he had to accept was quite far away.

According to Du Yuhan, it had taken him just 6 months of constant sword use to learn Sword Intent. That was after putting his all into the sword for all of those 6 months.

As for the Sword Qi, it had been 6 years since then, and he could barely form it enough for a single attack.

That was enough for Alex to know just how long he would have to persist to learn Sword Qi. Plus, he needed to find his own path before he could even attempt to form the Sword Qi.

After a full night of practice, Du Yuhan left in the morning. However, it wasn't over. Alex needed more training, and given how strong he was, Du Yuhan finally felt like he found someone he could compete with.

Alex went back to his house to do what he needed to for the day. He got some breakfast, went to his classes, and returned back.

He had decided to continue the practice after 5 pm the night, so Alex wanted to go to the fighting hall to take care of his challenges.

However, surprisingly there were no challenges. 'Did they give up now that I'm at Rank 3?' he wondered.

Since he still had some time before the practice started, he decided to do something. He went behind his master's manor and started bringing out some formation flags before putting them all over the open land.

He carefully placed the formation, making sure where they all went and how they were oriented.

Once it was all done, he simply needed to turn it on. Except, he couldn't. He didn't have enough True Qi to sufficiently power the formation for sure.

For now, he was just making sure to remember the spots he should put the formation flags when the time came.

He pulled them all out and put them back on the ground at the exact same position, with the exact same orientation.

Once he was sure that he remembered it all and could easily reproduce the formation, he kept them all back.

At the same time, Du Yuhan returned back and the two of them started their training all over again.

Time slowly passed while the two of them trained, and before they even knew it, nearly 4 hours of training had gone by.

"Let's take some rest. We will start again in 20 minutes," Du Yuhan said as he huffed from the lack of breath.

Alex wasn't nearly as out of breath and that surprised Du Yuhan a lot. As a body cultivator, Alex just didn't get breathless as easily as the others did.

Still, he sat down and rested for a bit. 'I should breakthrough after this,' he thought.

Suddenly, Du Yuhan felt his storage bag vibrate. He took out a talisman from his bag and read the message.

BANG

At the same time, the door to the training hall fully opened and a Wen Cheng with very shocked emotions walked into the room.

Alex was surprised to see that. "What's going on, master?" he asked.

"It's changed," Wen Cheng said.

"What's changed?" Alex asked.

"The rank. The number 1 rank changed again," Wen Cheng said. "We have a new prime disciple."

"What?!" Alex said in surprise. "You mean someone other than Yang Ma?"

"Yes," Wen Cheng said. "Yang Ma was just beaten by—"

"Trevor," Du Yuhan said from the side as he put down his talisman with a bit of surprise on his face too.

"Yes," Wen Cheng said. "You got the message, I see. Trevor just challenged Yang Ma to a battle and won against him."

Alex was still surprised and then he thought of something. "Wait, isn't Trevor that one guy that stopped going up in the rankings?" he asked.

From what he remembered Wen Cheng talking about him, the player should have become a disciple of the Fifth Elder.

"Yes, that's him," Wen Cheng said. "He came back after a more than a month-long hiatus, and he came back strong."

"...how strong?" Alex questioned.

Wen Cheng shook his head when he said, "his fight against Yang Ma... wasn't even a fight. It was way too one-sided to be called a fight. That little guy came back way stronger than I would've imagined him to get."

"He's so very faster than you too at cultivating," Wen Cheng said.

Alex and Du Yuhan were both shocked when they heard that. Du Yuhan's ambition was to become the strongest. So, when he heard someone getting called Strong made him want to fight this fellow named Trevor.

"How strong is he, sect leader?" Du Yuhan asked. "You said he easily beat Yang Ma. As far as I remember, Yang Ma was in his 3rd Mind Tempering realm, right?"

"Yes," Wen Cheng said.

"Then... is Trevor in the 5th realm?" Du Yuhan asked. Du Yuhan himself was in the 4th Mind Tempering realm. Adding on the fact that he had a very mediocre spiritual root when it came to learning strong abilities, if he didn't know Sword Intent, he would most likely lose to this guy too."

"No, he is much higher from what I've heard," Wen Cheng said.

"Higher than 5th realm? 6th?" Du Yuhan asked.

"No, this person can breakthrough very easily without cultivation. I'm sure he's in the 7th realm, if not 8th," Alex said.

"How do you know that?" Du Yuhan asked.

"He's... similar to me in how fast he can cultivate," Alex said.

"You know something?" Du Yuhan asked curiously.

"I-I'll tell you some other times," Alex said.

"Still, he can't be in the 8th realm, right? I haven't even heard of his name before, so he shouldn't have been that strong," Du Yuhan said.

"It's just a hunch. In fact, he could even be in the 9th realm," Alex said.

"There is no way that is true," Du Yuhan said.

"That is true," When Cheng said from the side, stopping the both of them from talking any further.

"What?" Du Yuhan exclaimed. "He's in the 9th Mind Tempering realm?"

"Yes," Wen Cheng said. "I'm worried poor little Mei will never be able to take back her spot."

Du Yuhan felt the same. Only Alex was a little less concerned about that.

"That's... not necessarily true, master," Alex said. "You see, I don't think-- no, I know his cultivation base isn't stabilized at all. At best, it could be equivalent to 7th or at best, 8th Mind Tempering realm at best."

Wen Cheng's eyes shined as he finally remembered. "Right. Meaning that if they fight, little Mei will have a slight chance at victory if she can play her cards right," Wen Cheng said.

"Right," Alex said with a smile. "Also... if Sister can't take her down then... I might go and do it myself."

Wen Cheng was surprised at the level of conviction he could hear in Alex's voice.

"Are you sure about that?" he asked.

"I believe I have a very high chance of beating him after I breakthrough once more," Alex said. "And if I use everything in my arsenal, I can beat him with 100% guarantee."

"I might not be as strong as brother Yuhan here, but I'm sure I can at least do that much," Alex said.

Wen Cheng nodded when he thought about how strong his disciple really was.

"Little Yuhan, are you sure you don't want the spot?" he asked.

Du Yuhan simply shook his head.

"I see," Wen Cheng said. "Alright, you guys keep practicing. I will go back to my tasks."

Wen Cheng turned around to leave. However, just as he opened the door, he remembered something and turned around.

"Oh, right. Yu Ming, make sure to go easy on him. His pride has been broken, so... be a little cautious how you go about the fight tomorrow, okay?" Wen Cheng asked.

"Tomorrow?" Alex said with surprise and thought about it. "Ah, right. I will make sure to make it look like I barely won, master."

"Actually, no. That would make him feel worse. Just show that you are strong and that you were hiding it all this time. Once he sees the difference, the loss won't hit him as hard as it will if you acted weaker," Wen Cheng said.

"Oh, okay," Alex said. He still needed to learn a bit about understanding how others thought and felt.

"Do you still want to train?" Du Yuhan asked.

"Yes," Alex said and got back up. Even though it hadn't been 20 minutes yet, they both felt like they were totally rested after hearing the news.

They could only imagine what the entire sect would be feeling like right now after hearing that the second strongest person they knew of in the sect right now lost to a newcomer in the sect.

Alex could only imagine the news it must've made. While the many elders focused on him and stopped him from going up in ranks, they were clearly blindsided from the surprise 1st rank from this disciple that went into hiding for over a month.

Now that he was nearly in the True realms, he was sure to make some changes in the rankings. Or at least, they thought so.

After training for a bit longer, Alex and Du Yuhan both decided to stop the training there for the night and went back to their home.

Tomorrow was going to be a hectic day.

Chapter 475 - Improvement And Worry

Alex was in his room, looking at his status. It had been over a week since he had broken through, and although it was probably a little too fast to break through once again, it just felt right to him.

His cultivation base was fully stabilized thanks to the two sessions of intense training he had gone over with Du Yuhan. Not only was his cultivation base stabilizing, but even his Sword Intent was also starting to be stable as well.

There had been moments where his Sword Intent came to be during the fights even when he wasn't consciously minding his intentions.

If he could proceed to do everything subconsciously without ever having to make sure his intentions were on point while using the sword, he would advance to the rank of Weapon Intent users as the ones he saw in the competition in 2 months ago.

His face was unable to stop a smile from forming the same way he was unable to keep his excitement under check.

He took a deep breath and brought his hands forward to click on the button.

The moment he touched the button, he felt a rush of Qi swarm his body, going through all the meridians without stopping and finally into his mind. Once there, the Qi then rushed back down through his body once more, decreasing in amount the whole time.

By the time the Qi was gone, he could feel his cultivation base increase to a level he had never before felt.

He broke through.

"Woah!" he thought as he remembered the experience. He was surprised how well he could feel the Qi during his breakthrough nowadays. And it was only getting more and more pronounced.

'Did it always originate from my lower stomach when I broke through in the earlier realms as well?' he wondered. The only reason he even knew it originated there, despite not feeling it was because he knew for a fact that his Qi was stored in that area back from when he ate those pears in the Forbidden Fields.

"I wonder if there is a reason why only I think that? There doesn't seem to be any public information regarding this knowledge," he thought.

Alex was sure that he was correct about it though. There was no doubt. It wasn't only what he felt in the Forbidden Forest though, it was as if knowing that single piece of knowledge unlocked another part of the information in his brain regarding some medical knowledge.

Alex soon forgot about that since it had nothing to do with what he was doing right now. Since he had broken through, he started feeling his Qi.

His Qi was much denser once more and he could feel his strength reach quite high. "8th mind tempering realm?" he assumed. It was quite hard to quantify his increase in strength to a single cultivation realm.

He had never seen or fought anyone in that realm, so whatever he thought his strength was, that would have some amount of falsehood to them.

"Should be enough," he thought and went on to check the other few things. The one thing he was mostly looking forward to was to see the increase in his spiritual sea.

He released his spiritual sense and stretched it as far as he could without straining himself.

"Wait, over 34 meters?" He looked at his divine sense in shock. He thought of something and tried remembering.

The first increase when he entered the Mind Tempering 1st realm was from 22 meters to 25 meters, which was 3 meters increase.

Then it went from that to 28-29 meters, which was a bit more than 4 meters in increment. While it had increased, he hadn't thought about anything at the time.

However, now that it went from that to over 34 meters with an increase of over 5 meters at once, he started to get confused. "Why is it increasing so much?" he thought.

He now had about the same distance of spiritual sense as he did when originally had it and stretched to the fullest.

Now, if he stretched as much as he could, he could surely reach more than 55 meters in distance.

Alex was happy, very much in fact. However, he soon reeled in his happiness for there was something else he needed to do right now.

Alex reached into his bag and brought out a single pill bottle. He removed the stopper from the top and dropped a single pill onto his hands.

This was the Mind Elating pill, a pill of his creation. He knew this pill would increase his mental ability again, but wasn't sure by what amount.

He looked at the 54% harmony pill on his hands, one of the 3 he had prepared to eat, and without any hesitation, popped it into his mouth.

Even as he swallowed the pill, he could feel nothing, truly nothing. There was no information about him eating a pill, nor was there anything he could feel was happening in his stomach.

"A dud?" he wondered for a second. Abruptly, a rush of Qi, similar to when he broke through ran up to his mind and started rushing through all over it.

Alex could only feel a cool sensation around his skull, and some sudden bursts of heat. Neither of which hurt him at all.

He endured the happenings in his head for a while and soon they disappeared.

'Is it over?' he wondered. Just to be safe, he decided to wait for a few more minutes more. Once he was sure it was all over, he released his spiritual sense once more.

It slowly spread outwards and soon reached a point that made Alex's eyes go wide in surprise.

"So far," he thought and immediately reeled back his sense. His eyes were still stunned as he muttered a single word. "40."

40 meters was what his spiritual sense had extended to. At best, he had expected it to extend to around 37 or 38 meters, but he had never expected it been reached such a high 40 meters mark.

"Is this pill supposed to be this good?" he wondered. That could only be the explanation to the current happenings, for the other explanation of there being something different about him was not something he was looking forward to hearing.

"Okay, good. I got 40 meters mark, that's great. Let's cultivate now," he said. He wanted to quickly move away from whatever he was thinking of at the moment and called out Pearl.

He sat him down next to him and soon the two of them started cultivating. Alex too started breathing in and out slowly and before he realized it, he had fallen asleep.

Alex logged back into the game after returning from his second last day at the university. He now only needed to go to his classes for a single more day before his exams would start.

After that, he was going to drop out of the university for sure. He was still thinking about how to break the news to his parents.

While he was surely earning a lot of money, he was also missing out on learning stuff that would be helpful in his life. As long as he could persuade them that he could easily learn later, but not earn as easily, he could likely get away with dropping out.

His storage bag was buzzing a lot, but he ignored that entirely. The thing that took his attention immediately even though he had already felt it already was his True Qi.

"50%," he said quietly. That was the percentage of Qi in his meridians that had turned to True Qi.

This was happening way too fast for him right now. From 5% to 20% to now 50%, the amount at which his True Qi was increasing per breakthrough was astounding.

However, this also came with a simple worry for him. If he kept on going like this, by 5th Mind tempering realm, he was likely to turn all 100% of his Qi into True Qi. What would he do after that?

As far as normal cultivation progress went, once someone converted all 100% of their Qi to True Qi, and were left with not a single hint of Common Qi, they could then, and only then, breakthrough to the True realms.

"Does that mean that when I get 100% True Qi at 5th Mind Tempering realm, then I too would directly go to the True realms?" he wondered. He just couldn't see how else it would work.

He worried that his advantage of having a high cultivation strength while having a low cultivation base was soon going to disappear.

"Urghh! Why did it have to be like this?" he worried. He moved around his hands in frustration, not sure if punch something or pull out his hair.

Finally, he managed to calm down and took a deep breath. He took a few more deep breaths and opened his eyes to look at his storage bag that was relentlessly buzzing for the last few minutes.

"What is it?" he thought and opened his bag to take out the thing that was buzzing. It was his badge.

"Oh, did they decide to come back—"

He suddenly stopped when he remembered. So many things had happened with his cultivation base and his spiritual sense that he forgot about the reason he had broken through in the first place.

He looked at the badge and saw what was written on it. Alex couldn't help but snicker at the words.

-Number 45 has challenged Number 3-

Chapter 476 - One Sided

Alex walked around the crater's side and then down the road until he reached the fighting hall.

He walked up to the stage he was called to and waited. Even as he waited, he could see his opponent on the other side who was looking at him too.

Alex send back a polite smile, implying that he was looking forward to the fight. His opponent scoffed and made a snicker.

The battle on top of the stage was starting to end and before they knew it, the battle ended. The winner took their badge and walked off the stage. However, no one was looking at him.

The surprisingly few people in the crowd around the stage were currently looking at just two different people. One of them was Alex since he was the 3rd Ranked disciple of the sect, and the other person was Yang Ma, who had come back after his one-sided defeat to make some of his names back.

Unfortunately for him, Alex wasn't going to let him.

"Number 45 and Number 3," the elder on top of the stage called out. Alex looked to the side at Yang Ma and walked up the stage while staring at him the whole time.

He had a little smug smile on his face, but it was barely noticeable to anyone who was looking for it.

"I'm sorry you had your fun as a 3rd rank for just 2 days before I came back to attack you," Yang Ma said with an ingenuine smile.

Alex copied the same smile and said, " Don't be, I'm going to stay as one for a while now."

Yang Ma scoffed. "We will see about that," he said.

The two of them separated and moved back to either side of the stage and waited for the referee to give them the go.

Alex shook his head and took out the Steel sword. This was most definitely overkill, but since Du Yuhan had made him see the ways of the sword, he was going to only use this one from now on.

At least until he could finally weird that heavy sword that no one else seemed to be able to pick. It was a wonder how the person who wielded it could even pick it up in the first place.

Yang Ma took his sword red-colored sword out and got ready to fight. Alex could see red light shine from the sword even though the sun hadn't gone down yet.

"BEGIN!"

The moment the referee said that, Alex immediately started his Jade Skin technique. A bunch of marble-like patterns appeared in his skin, increasing his overall defense by a realm or two.

At the same time, he waved his hands and a five-colored barrier appeared in front of him.

A fire-red slash struck the barrier and tried to go past it. Alex was ready to block the remainder of the attack with his own body, but...

BOOM

A massive explosion rang out from the barrier that pushed both Alex and Yang Ma backward. Alex was barely moved a foot backward, and the same was true for Yang Ma.

However, given how far they were from the explosion, it was easy to see who had the upper hand here.

"What happened?" Alex was surprised. He truly hadn't expected an explosion to occur like that. What he had expected was the fire element to significantly reduce and thus make the attack no longer a threat for him.

However, what happened was different.

'Heaven's Five Barrier is focused on controlling the element and lowering it, then why di—'

Just as Alex was thinking about it, he finally remembered. 'Ah right. My metal root. It's now way too strong for his fire, and is thus Ruining it when it comes into contact,' Alex thought.

'Does that mean... I'm invincible against him since my Supreme root is a direct competitor against his?' he wondered.

Yang Ma didn't know what had happened, but he was more than happy to send out another shot at Alex.

This time, Alex didn't use Heaven's Five barriers. Instead, he simply freely controlled the Qi in his body to form a metal Qi and brought it out forward to form a barrier on its own.

The slash struck the metal barrier and once more exploded the same way it did just before.

"What's happening?" Yang Ma couldn't help but shout. "What are you doing to my attacks?"

"Hey! You can't blame me just because you're weak," Alex said and readied his sword.

Yang Ma sent out another slash, and Alex did the same. Only his was golden, compared to Yang Ma's red slash.

BOOM

Another massive explosion rang on the stage. Only, this time, there wasn't just one slash to disappear.

A remaining golden slash flew towards Yang Ma who barely dodged it by using his movement technique.

"Damn you!" he shouted and immediately took a deep breath before blowing it all out from his mouth.

Along with his break came out a bird of red and blue. The reds slowly disappeared and soon it was only left with blue, a fire that was much, much hotter.

Alex had never seen this technique or this bird. However, even as clueless as he was, he knew what a phoenix was.

'That's quite extra,' he thought. He couldn't imagine how strong this technique was, but seeing flames of a different color, he got cautious.

"DIE!" Yang Ma shouted and made the flames fly down on him. Alex wanted to send out a slash, but then he remembered his master telling him to beat him with all he got.

"Very well," Alex thought and let go of his sword.

Immediately, he brought both of his hands in front of him and started releasing Qi from it. It was the same Qi that he usually used when he had to control fire for alchemy, except with a key difference.

He was using True Qi.

The bluebird stopped right in front of him as he immediately gained control of it. Yang Ma tried to move the bird, but it was no longer under his control. He had lost connection with it.

His eyes went wide in surprise as he looked at Alex in horror.

"Do you want it back?" Alex asked with a sly smile. Without waiting for Yang Ma's answer, he sent the bird flying back towards him.

The bird flew at a speed that was impossible to Yang Ma's eyes. Yang Ma tried to dodge, but that wasn't going to happen at all.

Even the elder felt like he was going to be a step late to protecting Yang Ma.

However, right before the bird struck him, it stopped. It flew, and moved around in an obviously fake manner, going around Yang Ma's head, horrifying at the thought of it hitting him at any time.

"Give up," Alex said.

"N- NO!" Yang Ma shouted.

"If you say so," Alex said and dropped the bird on him. The bird wasn't as fast anymore when it dropped towards Yang Ma.

Yang Ma immediately tried to form an attack to block the bird, but he had lost sight of his main threat right now.

Suddenly, he felt a fist land on his stomach. Even as his mind realized what was happening, his body couldn't react. So, despite not wanting it to happen, his body flew out of the stage and into the crowd.

The few members in the crowd that was looking, looked in silence at another one-sided victory that led to Yang Ma's defeat.

The dropping bird immediately stopped and perched upon Alex's shoulders in a manner Pearl never could.

"I wouldn't mind having a bonded bird beast sometimes," he thought.

The elder announced his victory and Alex smiled and took back his badge.

'Still, using True Qi in battle is not as efficient, huh?' he thought. He hadn't even used much True Qi to handle the bird, but he already lost 5% of it.

'It will only be truly viable to use True Qi when I can start getting it passively. And that would only be in the True realms,' he thought. Finally, he looked back at the bird and wondered, "how strong are you?"

He ordered the bird to attack the ground in the middle, and it left his shoulder to go attack.

The bird was incredibly fast and it struck the ground at the perfect angle.

BOOM

A massive sound rang out, followed by a bunch of small rocks falling on top of him. When the dust settled, Alex's jaw dropped to make a similarly large hole as he had at the center of the stage.

The stage for stronger disciples was made with very strong stones that wouldn't break easily even under intense battles. However, seeing the massive hole on the ground made him understand the strength of the True Qi.

However, True Qi alone couldn't possibly make this much of a mess. That was when he realized how terribly strong the attack Yang Ma was using on him.

'Where the hell did he get such a strong technique?' Alex wondered.

The elder came to scold him, and Alex made a small lie saying his bird was starting to go unstable, which was why he had to throw it out.

The elder was convinced after seeing the disaster, so Alex was able to get out without getting into trouble.

He walked down the stairs and heard someone shout "Junior brother" towards him.

"Huh?" he thought and looked aside to see someone in there that he would have never thought to see in this place before.

"Brother Xiao?" he called in surprise.

Xiao Huang was in the crowd, below the stage right now.

"Hey, junior brother, Good job on the fight just now. You did amazing," Xiao Huang said with a massive smile.

Alex looked to the side, expecting to see Luo Xing, but she wasn't there.

"What are you doing here, brother Xiao? I thought you would still be in Rubyroad city," he said.

"Oh, no. We came back today," he said.

"We?" Alex asked with a gasp. "Does that mean sister is back too?"

"Yeah, both of them are," Xiao Huang said while pointing towards a crowd in the distance with his head. The crowd on that side was infinitely larger than what it was for him and Yang Ma.

Alex looked towards there and saw a red-robed woman, standing out in the midst of many yellow-robed disciples. She wasn't looking in Alex's direction at all and was instead staring at the stage in front of her.

Alex turned his head towards the stage and saw a massive Iceball floating in the air, with a person inside flapping about, trying to breathe.

Beneath the ice ball, was a single woman with both of her arms up, controlling the ice.

Luo Mei was back.

Chapter 477 - Favor

"Sister is back?" he asked in surprise. He looked inside the ball of ice that was floating in the air and saw something yellow inside with occasional hints of green.

The elder that was refereeing the match suddenly stepped in and stopped Luo Mei. The ball of ice that was floating midair crashed onto the ground and the disciple that was inside fell out, unconscious.

Luo Mei was quickly pronounced victorious and the crowds of disciples looked around in awe. Luo Mei walked down from the stage and continued huffing. Alex ran up.

"Sister!" he shouted. "You're back."

Luo Mei turned around and chuckled. "It seems you're finally out of your room. Honestly, were you sleeping? I called you out so many times," she said.

"Oh, you did?" Alex asked shyly. It must've been when he was still logged out, so he couldn't have heard her call him out.

"Wait, if you're here. That means... Uncle is okay?" Alex asked.

"Yes, all thanks to you," Luo Mei said softly. "Thank you, junior brother. Taking you on my journey back home was the best thing I ever did."

"Aw, you don't have to say that. But you're welcome. I will always help you if you need it again," Alex said.

"No, seriously, Junior brother. Thank you for what you did," Luo Xing came from the side and said. "Do not hesitate if there is anything you need help with. Call us, and we will be there."

"Oh, thank you. Actually, I do have a small favor to ask of you," Ning said. "Let's talk about that later though."

"Anyway, who were you fighting, sister? Did you decide to beat someone because you saw your badge number was low?" Alex asked with a chuckle.

"No, I just took my rank back," Luo Mei said with a smile.

"Wait..." it took a moment for Alex to comprehend what she had just said. He immediately stretched his neck to look at the green-haired disciple that was no longer there.

"You beat Trevor? He was quite strong from what I heard," Alex said.

"I saw. He was strong, much stronger than I imagined. However, his abilities hadn't matured. He doesn't have any skill at fighting at all, and his knowledge wasn't that good either," Luo Mei said.

"I saw that too," Xiao Huang said from the side. "Like what sort of idiot continues fighting against Water with Metal and Earth? That kid needs to learn a lot before he advances to the True realms."

"He's one of those stupid, but talented ones that have been appearing lately I believe," Luo Xing said.

"Anyway, let's go back. Please tell me what happened after I left," Alex said.

The four of them walked back up the mountain. Luo Mei explained everything that had happened in Rubyroad city for the last few days.

She explained how her father was healed and how eating the pill that Alex left him helped get rid of the rest of the parasites.

Luo Keng was now starting to show signs of recovery. His pale face was starting to show color once again. He then ate pills that healed him and were now on his way to making a swift recovery.

Luo Mei also explained how the Mind Elating pills that Alex left her had helped her.

"I knew little brother was an alchemist and a healer, but I didn't know he was such an experienced fighter too," Xiao Huang said.

"Oh, you fought today? When?" Luo Mei asked.

"Yeah," Alex said. "It was right around the same time as when you fought, so you didn't realize."

"Oh, someone dared challenge you even after reaching the 3rd rank, huh?" Luo Mei said. "They must've lost their mind."

"It was Yang Ma," Alex said.

"What?" Luo Mei asked.

"It was Yang Ma who challenged me," Alex said.

"And you won?" Luo Mei asked.

Alex smiled. "Yeah, easily. I'm strong now too sister," he said.

"Nice. Good one. I always like it when I get to see his sour face," Luo Mei said.

"You really do hate him, don't you?" Alex asked. "Did he try to go for the 1st rank before too?"

"No, it's his arrogance. He comes from an aristocratic family, not unlike our own, but really likes to show it. Just because his family apparently has a Saint realm expert, he used to act like he owned the whole world."

"He's way more refined now compared to how he was back then. But still, I can't help but remember his arrogant looks and hate him," Luo Mei said.

"I see," Alex said.

The four of them reached Luo Mei's house and entered.

"Oh, hey Meng Yun, good to see you again," Alex said.

"Hello," Meng Yun greeted him back. She sneakily checked his aura and realized how much further and further behind she was getting compared to him.

"Are you and sister Xing staying in the city for the night, brother Huang?" Alex asked.

"Yes. The Beast horde will be attacking any day now, so we will have to stay here just to be safe," Xiao Huang said.

"I see. That's not a bad idea," Alex said. "Are you staying somewhere nearby?"

"Uhh... we were thinking of getting a lodging outside the sect," Xiao Huang said.

"Nonsense, we have so many rooms. Just stay with us," Alex said. "Sister Xing can stay here, and you will stay with me, brother Huang."

"Haha, if you invite me like that, then I can't refuse, little brother," Xiao Huang said.

The four of them continued talking for a while. Alex was also consumed by the conversations and forgot about the passage of time.

Suddenly he remembered something. "Oh no!" he shouted.

"What? What's wrong?" Luo Mei asked.

"Uhh," Alex made a wry smile and said, "Nothing. Everything is fine. I just forgot something. I will take my leave for now."

"Little brother, what about your favor? What did you want to ask me?" Luo Xing said.

"Uh... I don't know if I can ask that out here," Alex said. "Can you come into this room real quick?"

"Is it something we can't hear?" Luo Mei asked.

"I can't be the judge of that," Alex said. "I will tell sister Xing, and if she deems it okay to share, I will share."

"Very well, go on in then," Luo Mei said and the two of them entered the room.

"What is it, little brother? What do you need help on?" Luo Xing asked.

Alex sent out his spiritual sense to make sure no one was listening, especially Xiao Huang. At the same time, he took out a talisman and handed it to Luo Xing.

Luo Xing took the talisman and read what was inside. She saw a formation blueprint inside that didn't depict many things that a normal formation blueprint should.

Instead, it only had the rough drawing of the formation.

"What's this?" Luo Xing asked with confusion.

"It's something I need help on, sister," Alex said. "I didn't know who to ask. Fortunately, you came here."

"What's this formation? Where did you get this? I've never seen one like this before. I can't even tell what base formations make up this formation," Luo Xing said.

"Also, there are so many strokes. This almost looks like a Saint formation too," she said.

"I know, sister. This is a formation I got from a man I... from the clone of a man I killed. He had this formation carved onto the ground, and he was making use of it."

"You told me formations without metal were possible... can you tell me how I can get that one to work?" Alex asked.

Luo Xing looked at the formation and contemplated. "Did he really not use any metal?" she asked.

"No," Alex said. "In fact... he didn't even use any Qi to start it."

"Huh? How is that possible?" Luo Xing asked.

"Also, he used this as a power source instead of a regular spirit stone," Alex said as he brought out a Yang jade.

"What's this?" Luo Xing asked.

"It's jade with yang energy in it. You can find a few from time to time behind our sect," Alex said. "He was making use of it to use that formation to strengthen himself. Can you figure out how?"

"I... I don't know. I will have to ask brother Huang," Luo Xing said.

"Is that alright? I thought that bringing up information about the metalless formation was against the sect rules of yours," Alex said.

"I can explain to him that you brought it up first," Luo Xing said. "Either that or I can be truthful. That should work too.? Don't worry, he's my senior brother. Besides, this formation could be the key to figuring out how those things work."

"Well, if you are confident about it, then sure," Alex said. He handed her the yang jade and left it all up to her.

"I will have to go now. I made a promise to someone and I'm already late," Alex said.

He walked out of the room and saw the curious faces of Luo Mei and Xiao Huang.? He chuckled and said, "if you want to learn more about what it is, ask her."

He then tossed his badge to Xiao Huang and said, "you can use this badge to enter my house. Just take any room you like and make yourself home in there. I will see you guys later."

Alex said his goodbyes and walked out of the house. He checked the house next over and quickly ran up to his master's manor.

"Brother Yuhan, I'm sorry I was late," he said as he walked into the training room while apologizing for his tardiness, but when he went inside, there was nobody.

Chapter 478: Forfeit

The training room was completely empty with no signs of anyone, anywhere.

'Did he leave because I was late?' Alex wondered. But he quickly gave up on that thought. After all, he was only an hour late, and even if he left, Alex had already searched his home before coming here, and he was absent from it.

"He left his home, but didn't come here? Maybe he was called by his master," Alex thought. He decided to wait and see if he would return. If he didn't, Alex would tell his master to send a message to Du Yuhan saying to cancel today's lesson.

So, he waited for an hour. It was getting closer to 7 pm now, and if Du Yuhan still didn't return, then Alex was going to leave.

Thankfully, at the nick of time, Du Yuhan entered the hall.

"Oh, you're here huh. You were running a little late," Du Yuhan said.

"Yes," Alex replied. "Sister returned so I went to speak with her to talk for a few minutes, but it ended up being over an hour," Alex said.

"I see. I did hear Luo Mei was back," Du Yuhan said. "I also heard she fought with Trevor too. How is she?"

"She's alright," Alex said. "In fact, much better than how she was previously. Given how easily she won against Trevor, I would say that she is doing perfectly fine."

"She won against him easily?" Du Yuhan said with a hint of surprise in his voice. "Even I had a bit of a problem with him."

"Oh," Alex said almost mechanically. But then he understood what Du Yuhan was saying and asked, "Wait, you fought him too?"

"Yeah," Du Yuhan said. "He challenged me just now."

“He challenged you? Already? He only just lost like less than 2 hours ago,” Alex said.

“Ah, that makes sense,” Du Yuhan said after realizing something. “I was wondering how he had such a low rank. He must have gotten Luo Mei’s previous rank and came to fight with me with that.”

“I remember him being unconscious,” Alex said. “Did he come back to target you the moment he woke up?”

“Maybe, who knows. Although, I must say he was quite strong. I’m genuinely surprised Luo Mei won against him. Her cultivation base must have improved again.” Du Yuhan said.

Alex remembered Luo Mei saying that she was using True Qi to fight most of the time, so that was probably the reason why she won so easily.

“Did you use Sword Qi?” Alex asked.

“I had to,” Du Yuhan said. “There is no other way for me to beat him if I didn’t use it. Although, once I did, I did realize how much of an overkill it was. Sigh, that’s Sword Qi for you, I’m weak if I don’t use it, and I’m too strong if I do.”

Alex smiled when he heard that. Du Yuhan was normally quiet and liked to keep to himself, or at least that was what Alex had thought his nature was. However, after getting close to him, he had realized that he just didn’t have people to talk with and did talk quite a lot when he got the chance.

‘Maybe he just needed a friend,’ Alex thought.

“So, are you tired from the fight and want to rest for a few minutes?” Alex asked.

“No, it was hardly a fight. I just struggled because I tried to see how strong I could be without Sword Qi,” Du Yuhan said. “Once I did, I won. So, we can start now.”

“Okay,” Alex said with a smile and the two of them started training once more.

The fight between the two of them was getting more and more unhinged as Alex's skill level in using Sword Intent was getting closer and closer to perfection.

The clinks and clangs of the two's swords rang about inside the training for over an hour. At some points, the two of them had started using techniques too. Slashes with sword intent flew about, with Alex's sword intent barely losing to Du Yuhan's.

Du Yuhan was a little shocked at how terrifyingly good Alex was at learning stuff. 'Just two days and he's learned what would've taken me a month to learn with the same level of training,' he thought.

Alex didn't hold back in the least and started sending around attacks left and right. At some points, he was close to running out of Qi, so he asked, "I'm going to use True Qi now, please use Sword Qi. I want to see how I would fare."

Du Yuhan was a little surprised to hear that. "Use it once and let me see if it can handle the sword Qi," he said.

Alex nodded and used a simple fire slash, but it was formed using True Qi. The heat the sword gave off with the Fire Qi inside of it was unlike any he had felt before.

Once he slashed, the slash directly flew towards Du Yuhan who looked at it with surprise. Without spending a single another moment in hesitation, he dodged to the side and the attack flew directly to the wall behind him.

"Eh?" Alex said with surprise. "Why didn't you block it with Sword Qi? It can't be that it's stronger, right?"

"No, it's weaker, at least by a small amount," Du Yuhan said. "Much weaker if I use True Qi too, but... I need some time to prepare Sword Qi for attacks. It doesn't come naturally as it does with Sword Intent."

"Oh right, I remember seeing that in the competition," Alex said. "So that means I can use True Qi right?"

"I mean... yeah, but how much True Qi do you even have? In fact, I'm surprised you even have any," Du Yuhan said.

"Oh, don't worry. My cultivation method allows me to have True Qi way earlier than normal people. Which is why I'm stronger than normal," Alex said.

"I see, then go ahead and use it," Du Yuhan said as he got ready to fight. Motes of lights flickered around him as they started moving around him and condensed into his sword, forming Sword Qi.

'Damn that looks awesome no matter how many times I see it,' he thought.

Alex got ready too and used True Qi along with his sword intent to fight against Du Yuhan. Du Yuhan made the first attack and the fight began.

The two of them fought as if they were mortal enemies, fighting to get the other's head. If someone else saw from outside, they would surely believe that some sort of illegal fight was going on inside.

Alex only used normal slashes and True Qi along with Sword Intent and didn't use any other techniques, while Du Yuhan stuck to just Sword Qi. And yet, the sword Qi was easily beating his triple combination attacks like it was nothing.

They continued fighting until Alex couldn't keep up anymore and all of his Qi had ended.

"Wait, wait, I'm done," Alex said as he huffed and puffed. Du Yuhan too was out of breath and full of sweats.

"That was one of the most intense training sessions I've had in a long time. Thank you for that," Du Yuhan said.

"No problem. I really like this session too," Alex said. He took long breaths after being out of it, and just then, he noticed someone opening the door.

“Oh, someone’s calling me?” he wondered and sent in his spiritual sense to see that it was actually his sister that was calling him.

“I’ll have to leave, for now, brother Yuhan,” he said. “My sister is calling me for some reason.”

“Oh, okay. I will leave too,” Du Yuhan said and walked out with Alex.

Alex walked down, past his home towards his sister’s, and saw that his sister and others were standing around outside.

“What’s going on?” he asked.

“You idiot,” Luo Mei said loudly, surprising both him and Du Yuhan. “You should respond to messages quicker.”

“Um, I was busy training with brother Yuhan,” Alex said.

“Training?” Luo Mei looked at Du Yuhan with surprise, who looked aside, not being able to meet her eyes. “Anyway, you’ve been challenged,” Luo Mei said, handing him his badge back.

Alex looked at his badge in surprise.

‘Can’t be, right?’ he thought. The badge said that he was challenged by someone in the 15th rank.

‘15... that was sister’s right?’ Alex thought. “Brother Yuhan, what number was Trevor ranked as?”

“Umm... 15, I think. Why?” he asked and saw Alex holding onto his badge. “No way, you didn’t get—”

Alex gave a sad smile. "I did," he said. Alex looked at the time and saw that there were only about 15 minutes left before it was 9 pm and the fightings would be over.

"But you don't have any Qi," Du Yuhan said. "You won't be able to win."

"I know, but if I don't go over now, I forfeit the match anyway," Alex said.

"You're out of Qi?" Luo Mei asked with surprise.

"Yeah, I was training very intensely," Alex said with a sigh. With zero Qi in him at the moment, there was no way for him to fight against Trevor, let alone win. So, there was no choice but to give up right now.

"Sigh, I won't go then," he said. "I will give up on the rank."

"Are you really giving up?" Luo Mei asked with concern.

"Yes. I should have noticed when you messaged me, sister. I'm sorry," Alex said. "But I don't think there's a cause for any worries. I will just challenge him tomorrow and take back my rank."

Chapter 479: Challenging Trevor

Alex wasn't as concerned about losing his rank as he thought he would be. The only thing that changed was that he would have to live in a slightly less nice-looking house for the night, but he was never concerned about the aesthetics of the place he lived in anyway.

Once he went to the new place, he gave Xiao Huang his own room and went on to cultivate for the night.

Once he was inside of a room, he didn't need to worry about Xiao Huang seeing Pearl, so he was free to cultivate. He only wished that Xiao Huang did not call to ask him for something, as he wouldn't be conscious for the night.

With that thought, he started cultivating. With his body cultivation reaching the 3rd realm of Meridian Tempering realm, he was getting closer and closer to his own cultivation base. So, the pain he was feeling was also growing more and more.

It took him a few seconds to adjust to the new pain and be able to focus on cultivating. Once he did, he soon fell asleep.

Alex woke up on the morning of Thursday. The moment he woke up, the pain he felt had increased once more. Pearl had once again broken through and was now in the 4th Meridian Tempering realm.

‘Are such fast breakthroughs okay?’ he wondered. Beasts were different from humans in how they were cultivated, and how they broke through. But, it was still weird to see that Pearl was breaking through so quickly even at higher realms.

‘He hasn’t trained much ever since we came back to the Tiger sect, so maybe I should stop him from training as fast as he is. I should definitely stop feeding him so many beast cores,’ Alex thought.

He needed to leave, so he found Xiao Huang and told him he was going to spend the whole day studying something and let him get out of the room.

Xiao Huang was also eager to go roam the city today, so he left early to find Luo Xing as well. However, before he left, he asked Alex to let them know when he was challenged by Trevor.

Alex nodded and went back to his room to log out.

He walked out of the capsule and finally had a moment to think. ‘My parents sent me to study, and yet here I am playing games. And somehow it worked. I wonder what they’ll think once they learn I’ve left university for good?’ he thought.

Today was the last day before exams which due to the assignments he already had, didn’t carry much credit. He simply had to attend all of the exams to pass at this point.

He sighed when he thought of all this and put it out of his mind. After that, he went to have his breakfast.

* * * * *

It was late in the afternoon and the green-haired Trevor was in his master's room, looking at his frustrated face.

"Where the hell do you go all day long? I called you so many times. Can't you at least respond if you can't come?" the Fifth Elder shouted angrily.

"I told you, master, I need to be somewhere else during the day, so I can't do anything for that time," Trevor said, with a hint of anger in his voice as well.

"Don't run your mouth in front of me. I thought you were a talented young individual but turned out you were trash who couldn't even win against someone who is weaker than you," the Fifth Elder shouted.

"I could understand if it was with Du Yuhan, I heard he had Sword Qi, so it's understandable if you lost to him. But how the hell did you manage to lose to a girl that's 2 realms weaker than you?" he continued shouting.

Trevor showed signs of frustration as he himself was thinking about the same point. There was no reason for him to lose there, but he somehow managed to lose anyhow.

"Her attacks were way stronger than any I'm used to," Trevor said. "Also, my attacks were weirdly ineffective against her."

"That's because you tried to fight her Superior Water spiritual roots with your Dual Earth-Metal roots. No matter how strong your attacks were, they would lose a bit of strength against her. I taught you this, and yet you kept using those skills against her."

“Even an idiot would realize that at some point he needs to change his tactic and start fighting physically,” the Fifth Elder said.

‘This fucker! If it weren’t for him giving me stuff for free, does he think I would stay around, facing such humiliations?’ Trevor thought.

“You know what? You will go to the Fighting Hall right now and fight Luo Mei again. You need to beat her and become the first rank disciple no matter what,” the Fifth Elder said.

Trevor tried not to show the anger in his voice and spoke, “What if the Du Yuhan guy comes to take the rank away from me if I win, what do I do then?”

“No, he won’t. He didn’t take it when Luo Mei was missing, so it seems he doesn’t really want the rank for himself. Either that or the First Elder isn’t pressuring him at all. That disciple is an idiot too, not taking the opportunity to win.”

“Sigh, why are there so many idiots in our sect,” the Fifth Elder sighed.

“Okay, I will go and challenge the gir—” Trevor stopped speaking when his badge started buzzing in his storage bag.

“What’s wrong?” the Fifth Elder asked after he stopped mid-speech.

“I don’t know. Let me check,” he said as he took out his badge and saw the challenge being issued.

“That’s... the guy from yesterday; the one whose position I took,” Trevor said.

“What? Did the Sect Leader’s other disciple challenge you?” the Fifth Elder asked in surprise.

“Yeah, it’s him. Should I wait, or go right now?” Trevor asked.

“That guy is an idiot too. How is he so confident to challenge you after you beat him yesterday?” the Fifth Elder asked.

“I... didn’t,” Trevor said. “He didn’t show up to the fight, so I got the rank by forfeit. He must be coming to take back his rank.”

“I see. No need to wait at all. Just go and beat him. As far as I know, he should be hiding his strength and is around the 5th Mind Tempering realm. But you’ll surely win. Go!” the Fifth Elder said.

Trevor nodded and walked out of the room. He didn’t waste any time as he walked over to the fighting hall and went to the stage to wait for his number to be called out.

After their numbers were called out the first time, there were people that had started gathering around the stage, waiting to see the fight. Everyone knew who the 3rd ranking disciple was and who was coming to take his title back.

So, they were ready for a show to begin.

The fight that was taking place on top of the stage right now was coming to a close. The Elder refereeing the match stepped in to stop one of the fighter’s attacks and pronounced him the winner.

Then, he called to Alex and Trevor. Both of them were ready for the fight, so they showed themselves and walked up to the stage.

The Elder nodded when he saw them and took away their badge.

Alex looked at Trevor and was a little surprised at how different he looked from the normal person. Green hair didn’t look as natural as red or light bluish hairs did, even though their existence didn’t seem that different.

Alex hadn’t asked how Trevor fought at all, as he wanted to learn to fight him by fighting him. When he saw Trevor take out a sword, he sighed; there wasn’t going to be many challenges from a technical perspective.

Now, he could only hope that Trevor had some unique techniques up his sleeves so that he had some fun in the fights.

Alex was also thinking about how much ability of his he should use for some moment. Soon, he finalized on only using Common Qi, followed by not using spiritual sense at all.

Even though that was one of his strongest strengths, he wanted to keep that for unless he needed it. As for his other techniques such as invisibility and teleportation, he didn't want to use it as it wouldn't be much fun to use them in a simple fight.

Alex then took out his sword as well and got into a fighting stance. 'Earth and Metal, right? I wonder what other spiritual roots he has,' Alex thought.

"FIGHT!" the elder shouted.

Trevor's sword immediately started glowing with brown color as he sent the slash flying towards Alex. This was the attack of a 9th Mind Tempering realm cultivator, so no matter how confident Alex was with his own body, he wasn't going to risk it at all.

So, he dodged to the side and sent a glowing brown slash of his own to see how Trevor would react.

Instead of dodging, Trevor directly hit the slash aside. He felt the strength of the slash he had just felt and scoffed at it; it was too weak to be effective against him.

Alex smiled a little as well. His scouting attack had been misjudged as an actual attack. He could have some fun with this.

Without stopping, Alex sent out 4 other slashes, each the same strength as the last one, except for wood slash, which he attacked using the 2nd strike of the Elusive Heavenly Sword technique.

Since that was the only slash not from a mortal grade technique, Trevor mistook that to be Alex's strongest attack.

He was starting to get overconfident now. All he thought now was that Alex was weak.

Trevor's sword started to glow with yellow color, and at the same time, his feet were starting to release some unnoticeable brown light. He then brought his foot upwards and slammed it onto the ground. With the same momentum, he slashed his sword too.

A flying yellow slash that targeted Alex came his way. Alex wanted to dodge, but he didn't notice the brown light underneath the slash that was faster than the slash itself.

Before Alex could do anything, the brown light reached his feet and suddenly rocks started spiking out of the grounds, immediately interlocking his feet. Alex couldn't move anymore.

The metal slash still flew towards him, and there was no way for him to dodge anymore.

'Screw it,' Alex thought. Playtime was over, and it was time for him to fight seriously.

His sword started lighting up with yellow light as well; he was using mental energy too. Only, everyone could see that Alex's yellow was much more vivid and close to golden color compared to Trevor's.

Without much wait, Alex slashed and a yellow slash flew directly towards Trevor's slash and struck it.

Chapter 480: Alex Vs Trevor

Alex swung his sword, and the golden slash flew towards the incoming yellow slash. The two slashes collided a few meters away from Alex.

BOOM

A loud explosion rang out on the stage that sent shockwaves to the audience themselves. Most of the ones standing on the inner edge, close to the stage were pushed back a little.

Even Trevor who was a little far away was pushed back by the explosion. He looked in shock at the force he just felt. There was no way in hell the force he felt had come from a person in the 5th Mind Tempering realm.

The force felt like his opponent was at his level, or at least close to his level in terms of strength. 'How is that possible?' he thought.

Alex took the majority of the force of the explosion stood right where he was. He hasn't pushed back even a single step, but he couldn't take the credit for that. After all, his feet were still stuck on the ground thanks to the earth spikes that made it impossible to remove.

Alex struck the earth around his feet and got himself free. The front side of his body felt numb from the shockwave from the explosion, but thanks to his body cultivation, he wasn't harmed one bit.

Trevor got out of his stupor when he saw Alex getting free. He didn't waste a single moment and sent a brown slash towards Alex.

Alex barely managed to break free from the constriction and dodged to the side. 'I can't fight him with ranged attacks. His normal attacks are as good as the best I can use without Sword Intent, and I do not know what other attacks he has,' he thought.

So, without any hesitation, Alex dashed into close quarters and swung his sword. He didn't put any Sword Intent into the attack, but the force of his normal physical attack was still quite strong.

One of Trevor's feet nearly slipped by the unexpected force. 'How is he so strong? I can't even see any element in his attack,' he thought.

Trevor once again used the constriction technique, but Alex was cautious about it so he clearly dodged it.

With the range, Trevor sent out another slash towards Alex. Alex dodged it in time and sent out a slash of his own.

The slash flew towards Trevor who hastily opened a massive bronze-colored barrier that was a combination of both Metal and Earth elements.

When the slash struck the elemental shield, Alex realized how strong the shield actually was. 'That's formed through Earth empowering Metal, isn't it? Damn, that's strong,' he thought.

Normal attacks were one thing, but empowered attacks were going to be a problem for Alex. That was unless he started to use more techniques.

By now, his movement techniques were mostly being used with 0 friction on his body aside from the soles of his feet.

Alex tried to dash back in, but Trevor had started causing spikes of the earth to pop out of the ground everywhere around him.

"Shit!" Alex shouted and jumped up to fly. He was far away from the spikes, but he was now being openly targeted.

Many rocks started popping out from the ground that was then thrown towards the flying Alex in a barrage.

Alex flew to the side, and at the same time, his body started marbling as he used the Jade Skin technique to defend himself.

He managed to dodge most of the barrage, but the few that still hit him weren't enough to do much damage.

Trevor started to get angry seeing none of his attacks working on Alex. He was happy that Alex couldn't attack him, not much.

He felt like he really needed to do something to take care of it all. He had about 2 or 3 techniques he hadn't shown yet that would probably put the match in his favor, but he decided to wait for a perfect chance to use them.

Alex saw that Trevor wasn't attacking at all, so rushed in and swung his sword. Trevor's sword glowed brown and he swung his sword as well.

Alex's hands felt a little numb on impact, while Trevor clearly felt the pain. In fact, there was even a chink in Trevor's sword. It was a very high-grade common sword, but it couldn't hold up against Alex's sword.

Trevor however didn't panic. He had already learned his lesson from panicking about the last two fights he had.

Instead, he found the perfect time to make use of one of his techniques. With a single slam of his feet, numerous yellow energy started appearing from underneath the ground.

Alex was surprised to see them come out so fast. He dashed back to escape, but the energy didn't let him. No matter where he went, they followed, and they were faster.

When they finally converged on him, the yellow light formed into a cage with bars on them with no opening for him to enter.

Trevor didn't waste a moment and took a deep breath, and waved his hands in the air. Many weapons started forming in the sky.

Alex could see the amount of strain Trevor was putting on himself with the technique, but the thing that took away his attention were the dozens of swords, spears, axes, and arrows in the sky.

And they were all turning towards him.

Alex wasted no time and sent out a Palm of the Sun, but the Metal cage seemed to have been empowered by the Earth energy, so it didn't break at all.

There were some cracks and he could probably escape the cage, but Alex didn't have that sort of time or luxury. The weapons were about to fall on him.

Trevor didn't waste any time with the theatrics and waved his hand. The many weapons flew towards Alex in the cage and would definitely hit him.

The Elder was ready to jump in to protect him, but at the last second, he stopped.

The many weapons crashed onto the cage, destroying it in an instant, as well as anything inside of it. Dust rose from the point of impact that threatened to cover the entire stage.

However, no one was looking at it anymore. They watched towards Trevor, who sensed something and immediately turned behind, only to see a sword coming towards him.

Even though he knew he shouldn't panic, he couldn't help it on such short notice. He flailed his arms trying to attack Alex with his sword.

Alex on the other hand was ready for it. His sword started shining golden with a clearly visible white light on the outline.

He intended to cut down the incoming blade, and so did his sword.

CHING

As easily as he could cut down a stationary apple, Alex cut down Trevor's sword too. The broken blade flew out towards the crowd and someone managed to catch it and stop it.

People understood how dangerous the fight was and started stepping back. Only the strong ones stayed on the front to watch it clearly.

Alex then followed through with his attack and swung the sword down on Trevor. Trevor let go of his current sword and crossed his hands on his head to stop the attack.

When the sword landed on Trevor's, Alex could hear a distinct metallic sound coming from it. The yellow robe was torn on the right hand of Trevor, and Alex could clearly see the slightly red metal that made his protective bracers.

"I see," Alex said. "I guess it's understandable that you have such items. It would be weirder if you didn't."

'How did he appear behind me? He was in the cage? Does that mean he dodged all of my attacks?' Trevor thought.

Trevor's hands were numb from the impact he withstood with his arms. A slight fear rose in his heart and immediately took out another sword.

This one was a bit weaker than the first one, but he had to use what he had. In fear, he started sending out slashes after slashes of metal attacks with earth empowering it.

Trevor was clearly fatigued from the burst of attacks he had done since he made that cage, but he wasn't going to go down so easily.

Alex on the other hand had started using Sword Intent, so there was no reason for him to lose now.

He also sent out slashes after slashes of golden color towards Trevor's slashes to combat them.

Out of the corner of his eyes, Alex saw a small brown light passing through the earth underneath him. He wanted to dodge out of the way, but he didn't. Instead, he smiled as a small idea arose in him.

As the slashes landed on each other, the explosion that caused shockwaves was so strong that both of them could barely fight through them to balance themselves.

Finally, the brown light reached Alex once again, and the rock spiked up to constrict him.

Trevor smiled and rose his sword in the sky to create a giant sword that was at least a dozen times bigger than the one he was holding.

Even Alex was surprised by it.

Without hesitation, Trevor sent it flying towards Alex. Alex sent a slash of his own, but it could barely put a stop to it.

Even though he had elemental superiority, the amount of Qi Trevor put into the attack was not small.

However, Alex wasn't worried. Just as the attack landed once again, he disappeared behind Trevor.

Trevor seemed to be ready for it, so he blocked with his bracers again. Only, there wasn't a sword coming towards him, but rather a fist.

The golden-colored fist was going to become the reason for his defeat.