

Alchemy 491

Chapter 491: The Palace

The land below them was a massive forest, denser than anything Alex had ever seen before. The trees have mostly turned red as if autumn had arrived.

Alex looked around and he could only see trees as far as he could see. The southern forest was truly endless.

"How long does this forest go on for?" Alex asked.

"This forest takes over nearly a third of the entire continent," the jaguar replied.

"And there are strong beasts in the forest all over here?" Alex asked.

"Of course," the jaguar said. Lady Ren flew down onto the ground and so did the other two. Alex couldn't help but be confused exactly where he was being taken to.

'They said we were returning to the previous king's palace, right?' Alex wondered. 'But I don't see any sort of buildings. Do they just live in the forest, out in the open?'

He didn't think that was possible, but who really knew about the beasts.

When they finally landed, Alex still couldn't see any buildings, but there was something here that wouldn't normally exist in a forest.

In the middle of the forest was a 10 meter wide, circular stone platform that didn't match the scenery at all. It was fully white and Alex could make out some designs in it, but not all of it.

Even when he was starting to, he had another problem he had to take care of. Because of where he was and how untouched this location was from humanity, the alchemy ingredients that grew here were of very high rank, with most being True rank ingredients and some even being Saint rank.

His senses kept on telling him to pick them up, but he wasn't in a situation to do so.

"What is that stone platform?" he asked, trying to suppress the urge to go out and grab every single flower and leaves that were in the vicinity.

He saw the three beasts walk upon and did the same. "Is this—"

Alex was about to ask something when suddenly light started shining from underneath him. All 4 of them were now basking in the artificial-looking blue light that was coming from underneath them.

Just then, Alex felt something coming upon him from the stone platform that started to mess with his body. His vision blurred as a bright white light suddenly engulfed them all.

When the light went away, Alex realized that he was still standing on the stone platform, except it wasn't the same one. He looked around and saw that the area had changed as well.

He was now inside what looked like a cave. There were buckets next to the stone platform on the right, with 2 feline beasts waiting in guard on the opposite side.

The cave itself seemed to mostly be made up of a gigantic white marble that was carved to make a cave, and there were crystal stalactites hanging from above him that seemed to glow on their own and gave light to the entire cave.

The only place the stalactites weren't available was right above the stone platform. He nervously looked back and realized that a massive wall was right behind him.

"Did we... just teleport?" Alex asked.

The two beasts looked at him with a weird expression, while Lady Ren seemed a little worried. "Was that your first experience with teleportation?" she asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "I do have a similar skill, but I've never really teleported with a formation."

"Well, are you alright?" Lady Ren asked.

"Am I alright?" Alex asked back. "I think so. Is something wrong?"

"Well if you are okay, then it's fine. Most beasts and humans that have come through previously tend to have an urge to vomit the first few times. If you feel like it, we have buckets over there for you," Lady Ren said.

"No need, I'm fine," Alex said.

"Very well, come. We are here," she said and walked on. The two feline beasts bowed their head at the presence of Lady Ren and the two beasts.

The jaguar and puma were well respected, but Lady Ren's respect was on a level that would put the emperor to shame.

'And she said she was just a concubine, right?' he thought. Alex walked behind Lady Ren, and the two beasts walked behind him to keep watch.

Alex looked through the cave in amazement as it was something he had never seen before. "I don't know much about and rocks and stuff, but are there rocks that glow like that? It almost looks like its a crystal or something," he asked.

"That's... not an ordinary piece of rock," Lady Ren said.

"Oh, then what is it?" he asked.

"That's a spirit vein," Lady Ren said. "A low grade one, but it helps keep the place running and also helps mask our aura in here so that we don't get found."

Alex stopped for a second and asked, "found by who? People from another continent?"

"Found by... you're too young to understand. Just get stronger and you will find the answer on your own," Lady Ren said.

"Okay," Alex said. He didn't like that she never fully answered anything, but he wasn't in a situation to demand anything so he kept quiet for a bit.

He still looked at the glowing, mystical-looking ceiling. "Do all spirit veins glow like this? I wonder if the one beneath our sect glows the same way," he said, talking to himself. "I never thought I would see spirit veins out in the open. I remembered hearing that this was what made spirit stones after it remained unused for quite a while."

"Not necessarily," the jaguar said. "Spirit veins do turn to spirit stones if unused, but there are times when the Qi in the area is so strong that instead of turning to a spirit stone cave, they instead get upgraded to a higher grade of spirit vein."

"For example, this one used to be a True grade spirit vein a couple of hundred years ago, but we brought another True grade spirit vein from someplace else, and stashed it above here. This one slowly stole away the energy from the other vein and was upgraded to a Saint grade spirit vein," the jaguar said.

"Huh?" Alex stopped in shock. "This is Saint Grade spirit vein? But I thought Lady Ren said it was a low grade one."

"Oh," Lady Ren said when she realized her mistake. "I'm sorry. I forgot that you haven't seen higher grade Spirit vein. Hopefully, you will see them someday."

"Some of them are a sight to behold. Especially the metal one in th— never mind," Lady Ren stopped speaking and got a little sad. She sighed and moved forward.

Alex didn't ask any more questions and the group walked in silence. There were a few guards along the way that bowed their heads towards them and from what Alex could see not a single one even saw him.

'They don't dare to put their head up, huh?' he thought.

Soon, they came upon a massive golden door. The door was an arched door that was nearly 10 meters tall and 6 meters wide.

Lady Ren stopped and waited for the guards to push the door open. In the meantime, Alex noticed a sort of drawing on the wall.

From what Alex could see, it looked like a face that stared deep into his soul. The face looked like a feline beast, but before Alex could even notice what it really was, a crack appeared in the middle of the face and the door opened to show the inside of it.

The door led to a massive hall with many seats carved directly from the marble that made the cave. So, everything in the cave was white.

There were about 20 seats on each side, and each seat was at least 4 meters in length and height. At the end of the hall was an elevated pedestal with a massive seat and two smaller seats next to them.

The two smaller seats were of the same size as any of the other seats, but one of them had a blue cloth on them with golden embroidery on it, and the other one had a red cloth on it with golden embroidery as well.

The seat at the center, however, didn't seem to be carved from stone at all. In fact, it seemed to be fully made up of gold from top to bottom with a white cloth hanging from either side of it that too had golden embroidery on it.

The carpets on the ground were yellow in color, almost as if they were meant to be golden. There was some white in the carpets but mostly it was just golden.

There were chandeliers hanging from the glowing stalactites that were all golden as well.

It was as if the maker of this place didn't want any other color to be used aside from white or golden.

There also seemed to be murals along the walls, but Alex couldn't really see them from outside.

Lady Ren walked into the room and stared directly at the golden seat at the center. "Can you bring out the child?" she asked.

"Uh, yes," Alex said and quickly called out Pearl.

"Meow!" Pearl said when he was out. He looked around at the bright lights and showed a stunned expression.

"This shall be your new home from now on child," Lady Ren said to Pearl. She then looked at Alex as well and spoke.

"Welcome to the Palace of the White Tiger."

Chapter 492: Four Great Families

Alex stepped into the hall and the door closed behind him. "The previous king was a white tiger?" Alex asked. "I don't think I've seen his kind anywhere in the forest before."

"Pfft!" Lady Ren laughed. "You won't see one of the 4 great families randomly in the jungle."

"Oh, right," Alex said. He thought for a bit and asked, "So I have the blood of the white tiger?"

"The Blood Essence, yes. Basically, you have the bloodline of the White Tiger," Lady Ren said. "Don't go out saying that though. As much as people respect the 4 Great families, there are ones out there that are jealous of their bloodline and would do anything to get it, and you would be a very good target."

Lady Ren then started to take a deep breath and shook her entire body. "Ah, finally," she said as a very strong aura appeared from inside of her.

Immediately, the entire hall became deathly still as not a single one inside could make even a peep.

The aura wasn't suffocating, or suppressing at all. In fact, Alex could do everything perfectly as he wanted. However, it was so strong that a fear popped up inside of him on an instinctive level.

"Lady Ren, you are scaring the child," the jaguar said.

"Oh," Lady Ren said as she immediately stopped letting her aura run free. "I'm sorry, little one. I am not used to having such weak— doesn't matter. I will try to stop from now on.

"Meow!" Pearl said.

Lady Ren was about to say something when she noticed something. She walked towards Alex and brought her face right next to his face.

"Are you... a clone?" she asked.

Alex's heart skipped a beat when he heard it. "What makes you say that?" Alex asked, concentrating so as to not miss a single of her words.

"It's because..." she stopped. "No, that can't be right. Am I seeing it wrong?"

Lady Ren seemed to be as confused as Alex was curious.

"I'm sorry," she said in the end. "I seemed to have made a mistake. I thought you were a clone because your soul and body didn't absolutely mesh together. But, they aren't so far apart that I can guarantee that your body is a clone."

"The only other idea would be that you are a saint realm cultivator who died and housed another person's body, but that sounds completely wrong, to be honest," Lady Ren said.

"I see," Alex said. "Well, it's fine. I'm sure there is a reason for all of this."

"I'm sure there is," Lady Ren said. "Although, I must ask. Are you really not a high-level cultivator that is somehow housing the body of a young person?"

"Uhh... no," Alex said. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, that's because you have something that most people in True realm or Saint realm wouldn't even recognize here," Lady Ren said.

"I have— sorry, what do I have?" Alex asked.

"That ring," Lady Ren said. "Can I see it?"

"Ring?" Alex wondered and looked down at his own finger. On his ring finger on the right hand, he had a golden ring with a large red ruby on it. This was the ring he found in the Forbidden Fields.

"Oh, right. I forgot I was wearing this. Is this ring of some significance?" Alex asked.

Lady Ren looked at him with a weird face. "You are joking, right?" she asked.

"Umm... no," Alex said. "Should I know what this ring is?"

"Lady Ren, this is most certainly weird," the jaguar said. "I don't think anyone on this continent has ever seen these rings, let alone own one."

"Is it that rare?" Lady Ren asked. "We should have some right?"

"No, Lady Ren. Her Majesty took everything of value with her when she left, so we don't have anything," the jaguar said.

"Sigh, right," she said. "Young human, you said you can use spiritual sense right?"

"Yes, I can," Alex said.

"Right, try using your spiritual sense on the ring. Especially the ruby," Lady Ren said.

"My spiritual sense? I'm sure I've done that before, but okay," Alex said and tried using his spiritual sense on the ring. However, like every other time, he didn't get anything from it.

It was just a normal ring.

"Nothing," Alex said as he shrugged off.

"No way, let me see," Lady Ren said and used her own spiritual sense on the ring and immediately frowned.

"See, it's just a normal ring, right?" Alex said.

"No," Lady Ren said. "It's a storage ring. Similar to storage bags, you can put items in this ring, only the size of the ring is incomparably large to those of storage bags."

"Oh, is it?" Alex asked with a surprised face. "I'm learning many new things today. But then why can't I access the storage if it has one?"

"Because it's not yours," Lady Ren said.

"Not... mine?" Alex asked. He thought for a moment and his eyes shined with understanding. "Oh, you mean it belongs to someone else? Like someone has refined it."

"Exactly," Lady Ren said. "Unless you can get rid of their ownership, you won't be able to use it."

"Umm... how do I do that?" Alex asked.

"Just refine it yourself. The ownership will be transferred over to you," Lady Ren said. "Although, I'm not sure if that is possible given how weak you are."

"Will it take me a long time?" Alex asked.

"It will take at least a decade for even me to erase the previous owner's ownership of this ring. For you, I'm afraid you will be an old man by the time you get to see the contents of this ring," Lady Ren said.

"I see," Alex said. "Well, I will keep trying then."

Lady Ren nodded and turned around to keep moving forward. Alex also slowly walked behind her and looked around at the walls where the murals were.

The mural to his left had 5 beasts on it, with their arms spread forward, nearly touching each other.

Alex recognized the White Tiger, but the other 4 beasts were a little too vague to exactly tell what they were.

"What's this mural about?" Alex asked.

"Hmm?" Lady Ren talked around. "Oh, this. My husband didn't like reading so he needed to stuff read out to him or drawn for him. To remind himself of what had taken place in the past, my husband decided to have this drawn in here."

"It is called the Pact of the 4 Heavenly Beasts. It was when the 4 Great Families decided to send candidates to look after places that needed looking after. My husband was such a candidate as well," Lady Ren said.

"Four beasts?" Alex asked with a confused expression. "But I count five."

"Haha, I can see where you are mistaken," she said.

"You have one of the heavenly beast, the White Tiger. The second one is this aerial beast known as the Vermillion Bird. The third one is the Azure Dragon.

"And finally, the fourth one is the Black Tortoise. However, the black tortoise is actually two beasts entwined together through fate. The tortoise and snake are fated to live and die together, and they always stay together. So, they are considered as one beast and are together called the black tortoise."

A fog seemed to have lifted from Alex's mind as he finally learned the names of the four Great families.

"So, the four rulers are these beasts?" Alex asked.

"Yes, these are them," Lady Ren said.

"I see," Alex said and turned to the other mural on the opposite wall.

This one had more drawings on it, almost a bit too many. Alex looked at the thing, but he couldn't understand what exactly was going on in this mural.

Going from the left, Alex could see the five beasts that made up the four Heavenly beasts once more. Only this time, they were extremely tiny.

After that, the mural represented a humanoid figure that he couldn't assign a gender to. The figure had something circular behind his head and had his palm facing the 5 beasts.

After that, there were hundreds of different pieces of something randomly drawn in clusters.

After that was a giant circle that seemed to have cracks all over it. After that giant circle was another humanoid figure. From the looks of the circle behind his head, it seemed to be the same figure from before.

He didn't seem to be doing anything at the moment. After the man was finally another circle, but this one didn't have any cracks in it.

The entire sequence of drawings was very confusing to Alex since he didn't have the slightest idea of what it was all about.

"Lady Ren, can you explain this mural to me?" he asked.

Lady Ren shook her head. "I'm afraid not, little human. I myself do not know what that mural is about. Only my husband knew what it was. Even amongst the family, I assume not many know what it is about. My senior sister might have known a little about it, but unfortunately, she left over 4 thousand years ago."

"Oh, it's okay if you don't know about it. I will be okay without knowing a thing or two," he said.

He then stopped looking at either side of the walls and stared straight in the front.

"That golden seat, is that the throne?" he asked.

"Yes," Lady Ren said. "That is where my husband used to sit, and that is where this child, my descendant will now sit. He will have to go through a bit of a test before that, however. I hope he doesn't fail."

Chapter 493: Bai Jingshen

"A test?" Alex asked curiously. "You didn't mention any test before."

"It's... less of a test exactly, and more of a ritual. At least, it's a ritual for people from the family that have part of the bloodline of the Original White Tiger but not fully. The ritual is carried out so that they can improve their bloodline, and maybe even evolve to become a white tiger," Lady Ren said.

"Evolve?" Alex's eyes went wide. Finally, someone spoke about something he had been searching for for a long time.

Pearl's evolution chance was still at 40%, and Alex had been wondering what it was for all of this time. However, nothing in or out of the game had ever mentioned anything about evolutions.

The most he could find was other players wondering what their newly tamed beast's evolution was about.

"Pearl has a chance to... become a white Tiger?" Alex asked. "Does that mean he will stop looking like a cat, and start looking like a tiger?"

"Maybe, maybe not," Lady Ren said. "I don't really understand how it works, but not everyone that has evolved has turned into a white tiger. Sometimes, they keep their original appearance while acquiring the abilities of their evolved self."

"If Pearl evolves and doesn't produce black stripes, then he would likely still show the other characteristics of a white tiger. Honestly, we can't guess it at all. All I know is that Evolution is definitely good for him," she said.

Alex then looked around the entire hall once more and asked, "who are all of these seats for? And why are they all empty?"

Lady Ren sighed when he heard him ask that. "Those are seats belonging to the subordinates of my husband. Namely people of the palace that served the King. These two's parents used to be one of them. However, they lost their lives during the many battles they followed after the death of the king."

"The only ones that still remain are hidden away in their own chambers, waiting for the next king to arrive," Lady Ren said.

"Is that so?" Alex then looked at the golden seat once more. "What about the two seats next to the throne?" he asked.

"That would be the seats of the Queen and the crown prince. The one with the red leather is for the queen and the one with the blue one is for the prince," Lady Ren said.

"Oh," Alex said and a question popped up in his head. "If there is a place for a prince, why is there no king yet? Did the prince not want to take the throne?"

"There was no prince," Lady Ren said. "Unfortunately, amongst the children born to the king, none of the male heirs had the necessary bloodline to become the king."

"Also, senior sister didn't manage to conceive a child in the time the king was alive, so the king never had a direct heir to the throne regardless."

Alex thought for a second and said, "if the king was gone, why didn't the queen rule? Surely she had the authority to do so, right?"

"She did, to a certain extent. Even if she would eventually be dethroned, she could rule until the next king arrived."

"However, my sisters were never here for the land, they were here for our husband. So, when he was gone, they all decided to leave and go back to the family. Senior sister also had to report his death to the family, so she left as well," Lady Ren said.

"And left you behind?" Alex asked.

"Haha, no. I was just stubborn and decided to stay behind, hoping my husband would come back someday. Sigh, if only my stupid delusions could be erased at that time," Lady Ren said.

"Anyway, come on. Let me take you to someplace else," she said and walked on. She entered a door to the left side of the hall and continued walking.

Alex followed behind and entered the door to see a white corridor.

He looked behind him and realized that the other two beasts were already gone. He, Pearl, and Lady Ren were the only ones remaining.

The stalactites in the ceiling shined everything stark white and there was not a single other color to accent all the white color in there.

"The king really did like the color white, didn't he?" Alex asked.

"Haha, he did. White and Gold were his favorite colors since birth. Which was probably a bias he learned from his family that favors the two colors as well," Lady Ren said.

"May I ask how you met the king?" Alex asked.

"How did I meet him? Let's see, I was the lady of a very minor house whose elders were desperately looking for connections. So, they set arranged my marriage with my husband back then. I remember being quite angry at the time, but over the course of many years, I learned to love him as everyone else did."

"When he was sent here to rule as a king, I chose to come with him," Lady Ren said.

Alex nodded and stayed quiet as he followed her. Finally, they reached a place that seemed to have an opening on the roof that let him see the night sky.

The spirit vein ended right around here and there was no longer much light for them to work with.

"It's just ahead of us," Lady Ren spoke as she walked forward. At the center of it all, underneath the open sky, were many stones stuck on the ground all over the open space.

Alex looked at it all and was a little surprised. "Are these... graves?" he asked.

"Yes," Lady Ren said. "We bury here those that we have lost over the years. Not many get to be buried here, but even so... the numbers have reached quite high over the years."

Lady Ren was starting to sound a little sad by now. She slowly sat down in front of a gravestone and said, "I may have found your successor, dear husband."

Alex looked at the white piece of rectangular marble that was stuck on the ground. The headstone had some words carved onto it in a language he couldn't read at all.

He wanted to try using his spiritual sense to see if he could read it, but now was not the place to do something like that. It would be incredibly disrespectful, and he didn't want to create unnecessary problems.

"What does that headstone say?" Alex decided to directly ask instead.

"It reads 'In memory of A King, a Husband, and a Father, Bai Jingshen,'" Lady Ren read.

"Bai Jingshen... was that the name of the king?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Lady Ren said. "Bai is the surname of the White Tiger family. If he succeeds, this little child will inherit that surname as well."

"Meow?" Pearl asked.

"No, you can keep your current name. We will just give you a secondary name that you will have to use officially," Lady Ren said.

"Meow," Pearl said.

"Haha, sure, sure. I will be sure to choose one of the best ones for you," Lady Ren said with a smile.

"That grave... it's empty right?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Lady Ren said. "We couldn't get back anybody from when he died in the central continent, so we had to give him an empty burial."

"Then... how are you sure that he really is dead?" Alex asked.

"Because the other three Kings themselves came to give us the news. They saw him die while trying to save this realm," Lady Ren said. "Only the stupid humans didn't realize that and thought he was trying to attack them. In retaliation, they took everything they could get their hands on from this land."

"Now, a normal beast can't even grow enough to enter the saint realm," Lady Ren said.

"I see," Alex said. "I do remember hearing something about beasts fighting in the central continent long ago, so that was a lie, right?"

"Yes," Lady Ren said. "The 4 great families have rivalries, but it ends there. There is no enmity between them and thus they have no reason to fight. Besides, there really is nothing worth fighting for here."

"So the other people were misinformed and attacked you? Why didn't the other kings try to clarify that misinformation?" Alex asked.

"I don't think they know there is misinformation being shared. From what I know, they were gravely hurt during whatever happened in the central continent, and so they have likely gone into secluded cultivation to heal up. It wouldn't be surprising if they started healing up all those years ago and are still healing," Lady Ren said.

"It's likely the only time we will ever see them is either when this kid becomes the king, or another king arrives," Lady Ren said.

"Sorry... another king?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Lady Ren said. "Since my husband died nearly 5 thousand years ago, the family will take about that long of a time to choose the next candidate to be sent over. So, in less than a century, someone will come to see if we already have a king or not."

"If we do, they will verify whether the king deserves to be one. If they can't, they will send over the next candidate."

"However, most of the new generation of the great family have nothing but arrogance, and I do not want to see them destroy what my husband worked so hard to build," Lady Ren said.

"For that, we will need to turn this little child into a full-fledged King in less than a hundred years."

Chapter 494: One Way Conversation

"Wait, there will be someone else coming in the next 100 years to take over?" Alex asked with surprise.

"Yes," Lady Ren said. "The one to see if there is a king already, and if the king is fit will come here first, but the actual king will come soon after if they deem one necessary."

"And why aren't we letting them take the throne again?" Alex asked. "Wouldn't that be the easier choice?"

"It would, but it would also mean that a lot of people will suffer. Which will include people that you will care about too," lady Ren said.

"Just imagine, you come from a very big family, having lived like everything belongs to you, and then you come here to find almost everything has been stolen by the humans on the other continents that do not belong to you. What will you do?" Lady Ren asked.

"Ah," Alex said. "So, you fear that the next king will try to get back what was stolen."

"Yes," Lady Ren said. "And in doing so, wage war that will destroy the whole world. I don't want that. My husband was empathetic from the beginning and even after that he mellowed out when he came here."

"He wouldn't have died if he didn't care about the people of this world. However, the next king is very much possibly not going to be like that, so we have to take the throne away before he even has a chance," Lady Ren said.

"I see," Alex said. "Guess, you will have to grow up fast, buddy."

"Meow!" Pearl cried out.

"Don't worry, you have time," Lady Ren said with a smile. "By the way, how old is this child? Do you know?"

"Um... about 6 months I think. He's not that old," Alex said.

"Dear god, 6 months?" lady Ren said in shock. "Oh no, we can't put someone like this into the fountain. I guess we will have to wait until he is in the True realms at least before we try to put him through the ritual."

Lady Ren shook her head and sighed.

"Alright, come," Lady Ren said. "Let's go see the real reason why I brought you here."

Alex nodded and followed lady Ren to a very inconspicuous grave at the very outer edge of the graveyard.

Another headstone lied there with another set of words written on it. Only this time, the words weren't that many.

"What is written on it?" Alex asked.

"It says 'Descendant of Bai Jingshen and Ren Xiao'," Lady Ren said. "Come here child, this is your mother."

"Meow?" Pearl asked with confusion. Alex on the other hand was stunned.

"Right, I forgot you said you found the body," Alex said. "So this is where you buried her."

"Yes," lady Ren said.

Alex walked forward and sat in front of the grave. He was still holding Pearl in his hand, but there he let him down.

"You can talk to your mother here, Pearl," Alex said.

"Meow?" Pearl still didn't understand what that meant. He still hadn't fully grasped the concept of life and death, so he asked where his mother actually was.

"Meow!"

'Where' he asked. Alex didn't know what to say.

"Just talk," Lady Ren said. "She will listen to you. Say 'hi' to her."

"Meow," Pearl said and turned around to the grave and meowed again.

"She says hello," Lady Ren said. "She's asking how you're doing."

"Meooow!"

"She says that is great. You should be having fun," Lady Ren said. "She asks if you miss her."

"Meow," Pearl said as he shook his head.

"Oh, why not? She asks," Lady Ren said.

"Meeeeeow" Pearl replied.

Lady Ren turned to look at Alex and chuckled a little. "You've really created quite a bond with the little guy, so much so that he doesn't even miss his own mother," Lady Ren said.

Alex didn't know if he should feel happy or sad because of that. If possible, he would want Pearl to be with his mother, but if that wasn't possible, then at least he was happy with him.

They stayed there, watching Pearl talk in front of his mother's grave and Lady Ren 'translating' what she said in return. They stayed there for a few minutes before it was time to leave.

"Say goodbye to your mother for now," Lady Ren said. "We can come back next time if you want to see her again."

"Meow!"

"Alright, let's leave," Lady Ren said and took him back to the hall. Once in the hall, she called some servants over.

"It's been a long day, so you can go and rest. Whatever needs to be done with either you or this child, we will do so tomorrow," Lady Ren said.

"Okay," Alex said and left the hall with the servants. He was taken through another corridor that lead the many rooms and was finally made to enter a certain one.

The beast servants opened the door for him and said something to him. Alex couldn't understand what they were saying, but thankfully Pearl could somewhat translate it.

"Oh, so they have rooms for humans too huh?" Alex thought as he entered the room.

The room was fully white with a bed in the middle and a table by its side, carved entirely of what the wall was made up of as well.

Alex sat down on the bench and took a deep breath. "It's really been a long day today, hasn't it?" Alex asked.

He started the day normally, but many things happened that almost made it seem like it was forever ago.

He met the Royal Alchemist again today, and while he didn't learn much, he was at least assured that he was moving in the right direction.

He then prepared for the beast hoard, and when he realized he couldn't stop them, he chose to give himself up.

He then met 3 saint realm cultivators, one of which was the emperor. He then met another 2 saint realm beasts, followed by Lady Ren, who seemed to be at the peak of Saint Realm.

He feared that today would be his last day on this game with his current body, but it turned out to be the exact opposite. Then he was taken here, where he came to learn a lot about the world and the hidden workings behind it.

"I wonder which continent the four great families are from. Maybe they all take over one of each? But then why would the head of the family not be the king of the continent? Does he not think that is worth his time?" Alex wondered.

"Bloodline of the White Tiger huh? They said it was blood blessed by the gods. There are gods in this world?" Alex wondered. "Or maybe that has something to do with the grades and not a real god."

"They realized what Pearl is and what his role is, right? So what am I doing here?" Alex wondered. "They said they wanted to check my bloodline right? But I already told them everything. What else is there to know?"

"Sigh, I will think about it tomorrow. I'm too tired for it today," he thought. "God, when did I last log out again? I forgot."

"Let me go see if I'm fine," he thought and logged out.

He slowly opened the lid of the capsule and walked out. He stretched a bit before going to the bathroom and then went to the kitchen.

He wasn't feeling very hungry, but he wasn't sure if he would have time to leave the game tomorrow on account of where he was right now, so he decided to eat something just in case.

Emily had some food made and stored in the fridge already so he just had to heat it up.

As he ate the food, he remembered something. "Oh right, I have to transfer the spirit stones I got today. How much was that again? 5000 True spirit stones?" he thought.

He silently calculated it in his mind and suddenly his eyes went wide. "That's... that's 4.5 Million dollars, isn't it? Holy... I won't have to ever work or go to university again."

"Damn, I might as well drop before I take the exam," Alex started to get excited. He happily returned back to the room and decided to check his phone to see if there was some message for him.

However, what he saw on the screen when he opened it, really confused him.

Chapter 495: Time, Preparation, and Languages

He looked at the screen once more so that he was sure he didn't misread what he saw.

"No... that can't be right," he said to himself and went into the settings to fix what seem to have been broken. However, no matter how much he searched, he couldn't find anything that was wrong with his phone.

He closed the phone and checked his laptop instead, but then his laptop said the same thing.

Now he was starting to get really confused. "No, what about online?" he wondered and checked. He found the same answer online as well.

"What the hell is going on?" He couldn't help but scratch his head in confusion. All the emotions he had about earning a lot of money seemed to have vanished and left him with just confusion.

"No way it's the same in the game right?" he wondered and went back into the capsule. He logged into the game and opened his eyes in the room he was staying in.

Finally, he looked up and to the right of his vision to check the time. Just as he had hopelessly expected, the time said 4 AM as well.

"How the hell is it 4 AM already?" he couldn't help but ask himself. "It was barely a few hours ago when I was taken away during twilight. There is no way it has been 8 hours already."

"No, it wasn't even midnight when we entered the palace, I remember," he thought. "Then why is the time already 4 AM?"

He wondered if he had lost some memory from the past few hours, but that wasn't possible. He then wondered if it took hours on end to go from the game to logging out of it. That was possible but still unlikely.

The possibility of that happening just on the day so many things happened didn't feel correct to him. "Maybe it has to do with this place then?" he wondered. "I wonder if time is moving fast here."

He decided to wait and see. However, the time on his vision didn't seem to move at any different speed than normal. "Alright, I give up. I will just ask Lady Ren tomorrow," he thought.

He wanted to cultivate for the remaining 2 or so hours before sunrise, but he wasn't sure if he could wake up after falling asleep during cultivation. If the beasts took that as an offense, that would be bad for him.

So, he decided to do something else in the meanwhile.

"Oh right, the money," he thought and quickly took out the storage bag he had with him to check.

He counted the spirit stones he had and counted about 4500 True spirit stones in there. "The emperor really cares for his family, huh? I will have to make sure he doesn't ever find out that his brother died while fighting me," Alex thought.

He transferred as much money as he assumed wasn't needed for him here. Which turned out to be a little over 4 Million dollars. With that, he wouldn't have to worry about money, ever.

Once he was done, he just lied there on the bed with Pearl next to him. Pearl didn't seem to want to sleep either, so they just waited for the time to pass.

Alex checked his time once again and it was indeed working normally this time. "I hope I'm not going mad from all of this gaming," he thought.

Soon, it was 6 AM and the sun would rise anytime now. However, since he was inside a room underground, he likely wouldn't see the sun for a while now.

"They said they were going to keep me here for a decade? I wonder why that is for. Since Pearl will have to go through the ritual soon, do they intend to keep me until the ritual is all over?" Alex wondered.

"Sigh, they were pretty clear about their intentions with Pearl, but they never let me know about what they wanted to do with me at all. Depending on whether they treat me as a guest or as a prisoner, I might have to leave this place just a little bit sooner," Alex thought.

He started wondering how he could possibly even do that, considering he was underground and the only way out seemed to be through the teleportation formation.

"Hmm.. What about the open hole in the middle? Although I didn't see any stars or moon last night. So... maybe it's quite different," Alex thought.

He would have to learn more about this place before he decided to do anything stupid.

Someone knocked on his door and said, "come out Boy."

Alex opened the door and saw the puma standing in the hallway. "Senior, what are you doing here?" he asked.

"You don't expect to sleep all the time, do you?" he asked.

'I didn't have time to sleep even if I wanted to,' Alex internally grumbled.

"Let's go, Lady Ren wishes for me to see if the child is ready for the ritual. It's really the jaguar's job, but he's a little busy right now," the puma said.

"Oh, okay," Alex said and walked outside, along with the puma. They walked through the pathway and arrived in a room.

The doors were closed, so he couldn't see anything inside, and didn't dare use his spiritual sense in the presence of genuine saint realm cultivators.

"Yao Jia," the puma shouted.

Alex heard a roar from someplace close and suddenly, a black jaguar appeared in front of him. Except, this one wasn't the jaguar he had seen before.

The hairs on this jaguar looked slicker and the body was way smaller and lean in general.

"Look after this human while I test the child," the puma said.

ROAR

"Speak in the human tongue," the puma said. "You will be taking care of a human after all."

"Oh, right," the jaguar named Yao Jia said. "What's your name human?" Yao Jia asked.

"Uh... it's Yu Ming," Alex said.

"Yu Ming huh? Is that a good name for a human? I heard you came here yesterday. Is it true that you—"

"Yao Jia!" the puma said sternly.

"Ah, sorry. I spoke out of place," she said. "Come on, let's go. I will show you the entire place."

"Huh? Wait I won't get to stay with Pearl?" Alex asked.

"No, only the candidate gets to enter, no one else," the puma said. "Just go away. I will call you when we are done."

The puma entered the room and closed the door behind him, leaving Alex without even a chance to respond. "What the hell? I feel like I have no say in any of this," Alex said.

"Hehe, no you don't. If you want to be heard around here, you either need to be strong or know someone who is strong. Come, let me show you around," Yao Jia said.

Alex wanted to say something, but he stopped. She was right. He was in the world of beasts right now and would have to work by their laws if he wanted anything for himself.

He sighed at his weakness and promised himself that he would grow strong very soon.

The jaguar named Yao Jia took him around the palace, telling him what was what. She took him to the King's hall, then to a training room, and then to the dining hall.

"What about the library? I heard there was one," Alex said.

"Yeah, that's where lady Ren and father are right now. They are probably looking for something there, so we cannot disturb them. Besides, I don't think you're allowed there. There is information in that room that your small brain cannot comprehend yet. Even I am not allowed in there," Yao Jia said.

"Tsk, and here I was looking forward to it," Alex said. "By the way, I can understand how saint beasts can talk, but how can you?"

"Why would I not be able to talk? It's just a language that one has to learn. I now just need to learn how to speak the other one," Yao Jia said.

"The other one? The mortal ones and the cultivator ones speak the same language you know?" Alex asked.

"Haha, no silly. Mortal language changes too quickly. There is no point in learning them. I'm talking about the two different cultivator languages. Have you not read any books or what?" Yao Jia asked.

Alex's eyes went wide as a thought entered his mind. "You mean the language of normal cultivators and the so-called immortals?" Alex asked.

"Uhh... no?" Yao Jia said, unsure of her own answer, as she cocked her head in slight confusion as to what Alex was asking. "Everyone speaks in one of the two languages, be it normal beasts or immortal ones," she said. "It's just different based on the place."

"So that writing that is on the gravestones, that's one of it, right?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Yao Jia said.

Alex then took out some random books from his storage bags and showed them to her. "And this one is the other one?" he asked.

"Yes! Yes! So you do know," she said. "Why did you act so stupid?"

"I was just unsure," Alex said. "So, it's possible that the other continents speak in another language?"

Even as Alex asked that he knew the answer was no. If the language was different, the information would be up on the internet by now.

"You don't have to answer that," he said.

"You sure? okay then," Yao Jia said. "Come, let me show you the garden."

Chapter 496: Garden

"There is a garden in this cave?" Alex asked in surprise. It didn't seem like the place for those sorts of things.

"No, it's outside," Yao Jia said. "Why would there be a garden inside the cave? You, humans, are such a silly creature."

"Oh, there is an 'outside' in this place?" Alex asked with surprise. "I thought everything was underground."

"No," Yao Jai said. "Only the palace is underground, everything else is outside."

"Now I'm really curious," Alex said and followed Yao Jia. They walked through a maze corridor and came to the end of the tunnel where the spirit vein in the ceiling stopped.

Beyond that point was a door with beasts staying on guard in it. Under Yao Jia's order, they opened the door which led to a flight of stairs.

The two of them started climbing the stairs and finally reached aboveground where they came out of a well-maintained gateway at the opening of the cave.

Alex walked out of it and could see a beautiful garden with flowers all around and a beautiful meadow to go along with it.

There were small beasts in the garden that were playing with each other, and adult beasts that were looking after them. Alex felt a sense of guilt when he remembered the many beasts he had killed up until now.

He had never once felt bad for killing a beast before, unlike how he felt when he killed humans. However, that was only because he was used to seeing beasts killed back at home.

However, now that he was starting to realize that beasts were also quite intelligent and were capable of the same things humans were, guilt started to manifest.

Beyond the garden was a wall made up of vines and thorns. And beyond that seemed to be a lot of trees. He wondered how close this place was from the stone platform he teleported through when coming here.

"It's nice, right?" Yao Jia asked.

"Yes, it's beautiful," Alex said as he turned back to look at the garden again. His face suddenly changed and he walked towards the garden. Yao Jia followed him to show him more of the garden.

"You know, if you like this, it makes me really happy. After all, I was the one— Hey! Are you even listening?" she asked when she realized that Alex seemed to be lost in his own world as he walked towards the garden.

He walked towards a flower bed and crouched down to pick up a flower.

"Hey! Don't touch those. Those flowers turn bad when they—"

The words stuck in Yao Jia's throat when she saw Alex pick up the flower without destroying any of the rest.

"Huh? What's going on? Every time I tried it, the flowers wilted and disappeared," she said.

"That's because you were picking the wrong flower. Amongst these entire flower beds, there is only one flower that you can pick without destroying the flower bed," Alex said.

"That way, you can keep these flowers and make use of this most important one," Alex said.

"Oh, you know a lot about flowers?' Yao Jia asked.

"I know a lot about plants in general, and a little about beasts, but mostly about plants. I'm an alchemist after all," Alex said.

"An alchemist? Oh, you make pills right? I've read about you guys," Yao Jia said. "There's no beast here that can make pills, so I don't really know much about it."

"What do you do when you get injured or catch some sort of illness?" Alex asked.

"Oh, we have a senior who can treat the unhealthy, but it mostly extends to illness and minor injuries. I heard pills can even regrow limbs, is that true?" she asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "Although they are a little hard to make since the ingredients they require is very demanding and also very rare," Alex said.

Alex then turned around and looked at the area he had come from. The cave opening he thought he had walked out of actually turned out to be a massive mansion.

"What's that mansion for?" Alex asked.

"That's the secondary palace on top of the real palace. That is where the King's family and other important figures are kept," Yao Jia said. "Although, it's mostly empty now with only servants keeping that place alive."

"Oh, I must've not been as important then if they didn't bother to keep me there," Alex said with a deprecating laugh.

"Of course, you're not. At least, not yet," Yao Jia said. "Maybe you will be more important if they find out something regarding you today."

"Something regarding me? Like?" Alex asked.

"I don't know. Father and Lady Ren went into the library to find stuff on you, I think. You seemed to have made them very curious about you. If they end up finding some importance in you, your status in this place will significantly increase," Yao Jia said.

"Hmm... you guys need an alchemist?" he asked.

"I mean, maybe," Yao Jia said. "But are you a good one?"

"Of course, I'm a—" Alex stopped. He was talking with True realm beast and most beasts he had seen here were of similar cultivation base or higher. So, if he said that he was a good one for them, that would be incorrect.

"I can make pills for common beasts, although I'm in the process of learning how to make pills for True realm cultivators," Alex said.

"Oh, let me know once you do. I will tell my father, and you can probably find some work around here," she said. "By the way, what does that flower do? You gonna make some pills with them?"

"Uhh... no," Alex said. "Can I take some more of them? I can explain later what I can do with them."

"Umm, they won't wilt, right? If you can promise that you can get them without them wilting then you can take them," Yao Jia said.

"Thank you," Alex said and got into plucking the few Spirit Cleansing Lily that was growing in the garden.

There were about 5 in total by the time he was done with them. "Are there more of them around here?" Alex asked.

"Uh, I don't really leave this place that often so I don't know," Yao Jia said. "But there should be a few in the forest."

"How did you grow them here by the way?" Alex asked.

"Oh, no I didn't," Yao Jia said. "I just ordered some men to bring anything that looks beautiful from the outside and they brought all of them. We directly brought the whole thing instead of growing them on our own."

"Right, that works too, I guess," Alex said. He started walking around the garden, looking around to see if he could find anything else that was precious.

He found a few more ingredients, but none of them were worth picking, so he let them be to keep the aesthetic of the garden.

He walked on the soft grass, amidst the watchful eyes of the many beasts that were looking at him suspiciously. However, after seeing Yao Jia behind him, they got on with their own business.

"What are all of these beasts doing here?" he asked.

"They just like to come around here and pay their respect to the family. Also, this garden is one of the only places in this area that beasts can come to enjoy the sunlight."

"All the other places are filled with trees to the brim and sunlight barely ever passes through," Yao Jia said.

"I see," Alex said and he looked at the relaxing beasts. There weren't just feline beasts anymore, but beasts of all shapes and forms. Deer, Rhino, Elephant, Boars, every species of beasts would be found here.

Alex then looked at the wall surrounding them and saw that beyond the vines and thorns, there was an actual solid metallic wall inside.

"What's beyond these walls exactly? Just a forest?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Yao Jia said.

"Hmm, can you tell me how far this place is from the stone platform on which we teleported here?" Alex asked.

"How far? Well... that is a hard question to answer really," Yao Jia said.

"Why? Has no one measured the distance before?" Alex asked.

"Um, no," Yao Jia said. "It's kind of impossible to measure after all."

"Is it? I mean you can just fly and see how far the distance is, can't you?" Alex asked.

"Oh," Yao Jia said as she realized something. "You don't know, do you? Father and the others must've been occupied with learning about the child and forgot to tell you."

"Tell me what?" Alex asked.

"That we're not in the forest anymore," Yao Jia said.

Alex was a little confused. He looked around and could still see the forest very clearly. "What do you mean? We're still in the forest."

"No, silly. I meant the actual big forest that takes over a third of this continent," Yao Jia said.

"Oh, you mean the Southern Forest," Alex finally understood what she meant.

"Yeah, southern forest as you call it, northern forest as the others call it; same thing. We're not there anymore," she said and stopped to correct again. "Well... technically we still are... but also not."

This just confused Alex even more. "Um, can you explain a bit more? I don't think I understand what you're trying to say."

"Well, basically what I'm trying to say is that we are currently in a Secret realm inside of the big forest," Yao Jia said. "So, while we're still in the forest, we also aren't in it."

"Get it?"

Chapter 497: Reason for being Isolated

"Uh... no, I don't get it," Alex said. "What's a secret realm?" He had never heard of something like that during the last 5 or so months he had been in the game.

"Huh? You don't know? Wow, the humans really don't know much, huh?" Yao Jia asked. "And here father said that humans were superior in most cases because they are closer to the gods."

"Hmm... what was that?" Alex asked. Yao Jia said something that piqued his interest.

"I'm saying you guys are stupid. How do you not know about secret realms?" Yao Jia said.

"So... are you going to keep insulting me and not explain?" Alex asked.

"It's just a hidden space inside normal space. You know how storage bags work right?" she asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "If I remember correctly, they use some sort of formation to squeeze space into those bags."

"Exactly," Yao Jia said. "Secret realms are similar. It's just a massive space, except it's hidden in normal space by squeezing it to the point where it no longer visibly exists on the outside."

"So just imagine staying inside a storage bag, only it's massive and life can flourish inside," Yao Jia said.

"Oh," Alex said. "I didn't think one could squeeze space this much. The person who made this place must've been really powerful."

"Eh? No! This one was made naturally. This sort of stuff just happen on their own from time to time. Although finding one is very hard since you can't exactly enter these places from the outside under normal circumstances," Yao Jia said.

"How do you enter these places then?" Alex asked.

"The same way you came in. Teleportation formation," Yao Jia said. "That, or under the right conditions, the secret realms open on their own for a brief period of time."

"This one opens that way too?" Alex asked.

"Yes, but you can't enter that way," Yao Jia said. "This one can only be entered through the teleportation formation. Any other method of entry has been dealt with."

"Sorry... dealt with? As in..." Alex asked.

"We have formations that stop this place from acting up. In addition to that, there are formations outside of this place that puts anyone who comes close into an illusion and sends them back the way they came from," Yao Jia said.

"What if it's a saint realm human or beast that approaches?" Alex asked.

"Why would the illusory formation care if one is saint realm? Of course, it will send them back too," Yao Jia said.

"You have such powerful formations?" Alex asked in surprise.

"You are in the palace of the White Tiger. Having such measly formations around is a given," Yao Jia said.

"I see," Alex said. "Sent back the way they came from... huh? Is that why no humans have crossed the Southern forest before?"

"Well, given that the secret realm goes from one edge of the continent to the other, I would say it's safe to assume that no humans have crossed the forest before. They would all likely have been sent back," Yao Jia said.

"No wonder," Alex thought. "So that's the reason why we are isolated. Not only is the continent itself isolated, but we are also isolated from the rest of the continent too. That would obviously lead to us growing weaker as time went on. Especially since the people from other continents took away all of our resources."

"So, how many points of entry are there? Is the teleportation platform I came through the only one?" Alex asked.

"For your side? Yes. There is another one for the Luminance empire's side. Although, the places you can enter from there are many throughout the secret realm," Yao Jia said.

"I remember seeing no one around the stone platform when we were coming in. Does no one guard those spots? Can someone come in uninvited?" Alex asked.

"Yes," Yao Jia said. "If they know how to activate the formation, they can easily enter. Although they won't be able to enter the palace directly and will only enter some other place."

"Wait, you allow people to come in? I thought you were trying to keep people away given how you placed illusory formations around the outside," Alex asked.

"Oh, that's just to protect the secret realm from the outside, not what's in it. We just don't want someone to come in and mess up with the secret realms. There are way too many lives inside to allow someone to hamper it," Yao Jia said.

"Other than that, everyone is free to come," Yao Jia said. "As long as they can behave accordingly that is."

"You humans love killing beasts. So I wouldn't be surprised if people came in with the intention to kill us. In those cases, most of them are dealt with," Yao Jia said.

"What if someone strong comes in with the wrong intentions?" Alex asked.

"Oh, yeah I forgot to say. Only those under the Saint realm can enter this place. Otherwise, they will need to wait for us to go pick them up," Yao Jia said. "Or at least I think that's what they do. I don't really know. After all, I was only born a few hundred years ago. There are still many things around this place that I don't know about."

Alex nodded when he heard that, but then got confused. "Wait, you are a few hundred years old?" he asked with a surprised expression.

"Yes," she said nonchalantly. "How old are you?"

"I will be 19 in a few months," Alex said, still holding his surprise.

This time it was Yao Jia's turn to be surprised. "Oh wow, then I am at least 400 years older than you. Haha," she said.

"Don't most peak True realm beasts live up to around 1000 years old? For someone in your cultivation base which seems to be not that far into the True realm, you should have a life expectancy of around 700 years."

"How are you still so young after nearly half of your life has gone by?" Alex asked. He wondered if she was using some techniques to make her voice sound younger or if she was changing the way she looked.

"Oh that, it's because while I am 400 years old, I've only lived for about 60 years. So I am very young physically," she said.

This just confused Alex even more. "You are 400 years old, but you've only lived for 60 years? What happened to the other 340 years? Did you hibernate or what?" he asked.

"Us cats don't hibernate silly," Yao Jia said. "It's just because of the time difference in the place I usually stay at."

"Since most of the important parts of the palace are under a time dilation, while I was born 400 years ago, I've only lived for 60 years," she said.

Alex's eyes went wide with surprise. "You can change the speed of time here? How do you do that? Formations?" he asked.

"Of course. It's quite easy actually," she said. "Well... it's easy if you have the resources, but I don't know if you can find them in this continent."

"I see," Alex said. "Do you know what the resources are?"

"Nope," Yao Jia said. "You will have to ask my father to ask the senior Zebra that made those formations."

"Sigh, alright. We'll talk about those later," Alex said. He turned towards the wall and followed it to the side with his eyes until he saw an open gate in the front.

"Can we go out there?" he asked.

"I'm afraid not," Yao Jia said. "You are both a guest and a prisoner here, so you will have to stay inside until the seniors can decide what to do with you."

"Tsk, alright," Alex said and went back to the meadows to sit on the ground. He didn't know what else to do, so he just sat around, waiting for Pearl to come out.

"You guys don't have any alchemy room right?" Alex asked.

"What's an alchemy room? We have some free rooms if you want to turn it to that," she said.

"Alchemy room is a room with the formation in it that perpetually keeps a furnace active in it. It's also quite sturdy so that if a cauldron full of ingredients ever explodes, it can handle the explosion," Alex explained.

"Hmm... we should be able to make one," Yao Jia said. "Although, you will have to ask my father later on."

"Okay," Alex said. "At least I can distract myself that way."

He planned on practicing Alchemy and formation for the little time he was stuck around here. He wondered what other things he could do in the meantime and cultivating was the only answer he got from himself.

'Although that will require many high-level monster core, and I don't have that many,' he thought. 'How will I get them?'

"Can I ask you a question? I don't know how rude this question is though," Alex said.

"Uhh... you can ask it. I will try not to get offended if it is in fact very rude," she said.

"There must be quite a lot of deaths happening around here, right?" he asked. "What do you do with the monster core of the beasts that die?"

"Well, if it's a spoil of victory, we let the winner take it. If it's not, then the one who finds it keeps it," Yao Jia said. "Why do you ask?"

"Umm... you see, I am in need of a few monster cores myself, and was wondering if there was a way to get them around here," Alex said.

Chapter 498: Planning

"Hmm," Yao Jia thought. "Why do you want it?"

"I... need it for some pills I might be making," Alex lied.

"Hmm, maybe you can trade for it? I really don't know if anyone would be willing to part with it though since they can all use monster cores in some manner for themselves," Yao Jia said.

"Hmm... trade huh? I should be able to work with that," he thought. "Alright, I will think of something. I will probably have to sell some pills for sure."

"Okay, do that," Yao Jia said. She didn't really know much about pills and was quite interested in it as well.

"Oh, uncle Teng is out," she said and got up from the meadow. "Let's go."

"Umm... Uncle Teng is... senior Puma?" Alex asked.

"Yes. Let's hurry, he gets annoyed if he is made to wait too long," Yao Jia said.

"I heard that," the Puma's voice sounded inside both of their heads.

"Why do you think I spoke out loud?" Yao Jia asked jokingly.

"Hurry up. I don't think this child likes me very much," he said.

They walked back into the underground palace and made their way back to the room where they had left behind Pearl.

As soon as they reached, the door opened and Pearl came flying out. "Meow!" he complained that he was left here for so long without Alex being nearby.

"Did he do something that hurt you?" Alex asked.

"MEOW!!" Pearl complained.

A confused look appeared on Alex's face. "You... made him fight you? Were you testing his strength?"

"No, I was testing how close he was to awakening his bloodline, and from what I can see, he's quite close. Still, he is just a child so it will take a while without putting some direct pressure on him," the Puma said.

"I won't let you do that," Alex said as he held Pearl in his arms defensively.

"Relax, little human. I have no intentions of providing any stress to someone who might end up being my king. That would be a stupid way to get on the wrong side of the future King. Especially one that is this young, so he will grow to hate me for sure," the puma said.

"So, what's the verdict, uncle? Is he ready for the ritual?" Yao Jia asked.

"Hmm... not yet. He is both too young and too weak right now. We will have to wait until he is either at least 10 years old, or in the True realms, whichever comes first," the puma said. "But given his speed, it might be the True realms that come first. The lord's bloodline surely is amazing at how fast it can help him cultivate."

"What do we do now then?" Alex asked.

"Nothing. You can go back to your room or go roam where you are allowed. As long as you don't bother anyone or try to run away, you will be fine," the puma said.

"I see. Okay," Alex said and walked away. Yao Jia followed behind him and asked, "You want to go somewhere else?"

"No, I will go back to my room and wait around for a bit," he said. "Let's see what your father and Lady Ren find from their visit to the library."

"Not a bad idea," Yao Jia said. "Let me show you back to your room."

"It's alright, I know the way," Alex said and left. He walked along with Pearl in his hands and went to his room to wait.

"Sigh, what do I do now?" he wondered.

"Oh right," he thought and looked at the ring he was wearing. "So this is a storage artifact huh? I wonder how much space they pushed into this gem," he wondered.

"Hmm, so how do I refine it again? I should try with my Qi right?" he thought and started pouring in his Qi to see if something would happen. Unfortunately, nothing did.

"Should I try my True Qi, then?" he wondered. He tried to pour in what remaining True Qi he had and failed to refine it even a little bit. In the first place, He didn't have much true Qi since he spent most of it, if not all, opening the formation to hide from the beasts back in the Tiger Sect.

"Sigh, nothing I can do about it right now. Let me arrange my storage bags then," he thought and brought out stuff from his storage bags.

He started with the alchemy bags and separated items by importance. He put the important ones into the wooden boxes and left the unimportant ones without any.

After he was done with them, he moved on to other things he had in his storage bags.

"Right, I will have to ask them if they can help me maybe refine this sword," he thought as he looked at the heavy, black sword in his storage bag.

He had only used this sword two times to kill two different people. One of them was intentional, and the other one was Song Zun.

"Maybe I can even trade it for something from this place?" he wondered. "No, they won't care about swords. What would beasts need swords for?"

He shook his head and put aside the bag with the sword and moved on to something else. He then sorted out the talismans he had and noticed one that he didn't remember seeing before.

"Hmm... what's this?" he thought and looked into it. It turned out to be just another formation blueprint that he might have missed reading. Or at least, that's what he thought at first.

However, the more he read it, the more confusing it got for him as the talisman didn't follow the normal pattern of a formation blueprint.

He directly looked at the design and his eyes went wide as he finally realized what it was.

"Did she perfect it?" Alex wondered as he properly read it this time around.

Luo Xing had improved upon the formation that Alex had acquired from Song Zun. The formation only had the drawing and nothing else, and the only other thing Alex even knew about this formation was that it didn't depend on anyone to activate it since Song Zun had used it in the Forbidden Fields.

Alex quickly read up on the information and started understanding what he had been doing wrong all this time.

As it turned out, to run the formation without any help from the setter, the ingredients that would be used to run it needed to be set up in a certain way as well.

Also, the energy that was going to be used as the pattern of the formations also needed to be uniform in size everywhere. That meant that places with too many strokes in the nodes needed to have more of that energy source as compared to ones that had less of it.

Unfortunately, that was all Luo Xing had figured out. And that was after conferring with Xiao Huang as well. Their information on how a metal-less formation was started exactly was still missing.

"If I don't have that, then I can't do much, can I?" Alex thought. However, then he remembered something.

"Right, the zebra, I should ask him," he thought. "Maybe he knows given the company he lives with here."

He would need to later request the jaguar or Lady Ren herself to ask for help from the zebra. That was now another task he had added onto himself.

"So I need to get cultivate to get stronger, make pills so I can get better at alchemy, hopefully, trade some monster cores, and finally learn a bit about formations from the zebra," he thought. "I will also have to ask about the black sword."

"Finally, I will have to request some duels so that I can train while I get stronger," he thought. "Since I have a lot of free time in coming, I will have to make the best use of it."

Once he planned all of this, he finished taking care of the storage bags. He took a look at that one talisman he still had no idea what it did.

"Yeah, I will have to ask them about this as well."

Once he was all done, he was about to log out since he had nothing else to do when suddenly he heard a voice in his head.

"Come to the Palace Hall," Lady Ren's voice sounded in his head. "And bring the child with you."

Chapter 499: White Tiger's Dominating Body

Alex walked along the newly familiar corridor with Pearl in his arms. The bright white walls and the glowing ceiling gave the area a different atmosphere compared to the outside he had been in not long ago.

He reached the door to the palace hall and was greeted by two feline beasts that were waiting for him and opened the doors for him as well.

"Meow!" Pearl thanked them as Alex nodded as well and walked in.

"Good afternoon, seniors," he said when he saw Lady Ren and the other 2 beasts standing next to her.

"Meow!" Pearl called out.

"Hello, my child. How are you feeling?" Lady Ren asked.

Alex kept quiet as the question was very clearly directed at Pearl. "Meow Meow!" Pearl once more found the opportunity to complain about having been forced to fight with the puma.

"He did that? I will make sure to punish him later, okay?" Lady Ren said.

"Meow!" Pearl finally got happy and smiled smugly towards the puma. The puma looked around not sure what to think. He had unintentionally made Pearl dislike him.

He grumbled how the testing was originally the jaguar's job and he wasn't even supposed to be part of any of it.

"You guys didn't spend very long in the library, did you?" Alex asked. "It's only been a few hours. Did you find anything?"

"Oh, it's only been a few hours for you, but for us, it has been days now," Lady Ren said. "Unfortunately, we were unable to find anything regarding your situation."

"There has been no precedent of humans with the bloodline of the Four legendary beasts. Many have tried, and some have even succeeded in integrating the bloodline for brief moments, but almost all of those have died," Lady Ren said.

"Those that still lived could never cultivate again as their body was mostly destroyed from inside out. However... you have somehow taken in not the blood, but the blood essence and survived it."

"You... are a mystery to which I don't have any answer," Lady Ren said. "Can I take a look at you more closely?"

"Uhh... Sure," Alex said and walked up close. Lady Ren closed her eyes and a wave of spiritual energy washed all over him.

"Hmm..." she said after a while. "I knew I wasn't being stupid when I said that your spirit and body are not aligned. But it's way too similar for it to not belong to each other. This is so weird."

She looked some more and said, "so much Yang energy. It's like your whole body is made up of Yang. Also, it's a shame your spiritual roots are 5 Elemental and Yang aligned. If it were less, you could have done better."

"However, your spiritual sea is quite massive for someone who hasn't even entered the true realm yet, and quite dense too. I'm looking forward to seeing how strong it will be when you enter the saint realm. That will be a sight to beh—"

Lady Ren suddenly stopped speaking and remained silent, looking at him with her spiritual sense once more.

After not speaking for a while, Alex started to get worried. "Is something wro—"

"SSHH! I'm concentrating," Lady Ren said as she continued looking for nearly a minute. Finally, she sighed and said, "dammit, I thought I saw something, but it's not there anymore."

Alex was a little confused and surprised. "What did you see?" he asked.

"I don't really know. It was some sort of texture or pattern. I thought I saw it for a split second, but I couldn't find it anymore," Lady Ren said.

"What sort of textures?" Alex asked.

"Some sort of lines. I think I only saw a part of it, but of even that I'm not sure now," Lady Ren said. "Are you hiding something?"

"No, no," Alex said. "How could I even hide anything from a Saint realm expert like you?"

"That is true, but... arghh! Just what is wrong with your body? The only thing I can even think of doing right now is taking the blood essence in you and giving it to the child so that he has a much higher chance of awakening his bloodline," Lady Ren said.

"You can do that?" Alex asked. "Is there any threat to my life if we do that?"

"This has never been done before, so I don't know," Lady Ren said. "All I know is that despite having the bloodlines of the White Tiger, you haven't awakened any skills the bloodline comes with, so we may be safe."

Alex nodded when he heard that but then stopped as he remembered something. "Um... actually, there is something I haven't mentioned before. I wasn't hiding or anything, I just forgot to mention something very important," Alex said.

The beasts got curious and looked at him curiously. "What is it?" Lady Ren asked.

"You see, whenever Pearl cultivates, I am forcefully made to cultivate the same thing with him as well," Alex said.

"Forcefully made to cultivate?" Lady Ren seemed confused.

"Um, let me just show you," Alex said and sat on the ground and pet Pearl as he told him to start cultivating.

Pearl sat on his lap and closed his eyes as white light shined around him. The white light soon turned to yellow, which then turned to golden. He had started cultivating.

As soon as that happened, numerous cuts appeared all around Alex, which hurt him quite a lot, but not enough to make him lose his attention from the current situation.

"See? This is what I— What's wrong with you guys?" Alex asked when he saw all of their eyes wide open and their pupils enlarged.

"It can't be," the jaguar said.

"He hasn't even awakened his bloodline yet," the Puma said.

"The White Tiger's Dominating Body technique. How... does he have the technique? Those should be memories lost to him for a very long time," Lady Ren said.

"Memories?" Alex asked.

"Yes, Memories of the first White Tiger," Lady Ren said. "When the first 4 beasts were blessed by the gods, they all received some sorts of skills, each different from each other."

"In the case of the White Tiger, the progenitor got a few different techniques that were later named White Tiger's Golden Claw, White Tiger's Roar, White Tiger's Steps, and a few others."

"These skills were skills ingrained onto the bloodline itself, and whoever acquired the bloodline, acquired the memory of these skills as well. The first children of the progenitor White Tiger could all use these skills pretty well."

"However, as the White Tiger's bloodline extended and started to get diluted, the number of skills they acquired also started to dilute. If they did retain the memories, it would only be some of them, not all."

"My husband had the knowledge of White Tiger's Steps and White Tiger's Golden Claw, just like many of his brothers and sisters. However, only very few White Tigers ever acquired the memories of the White Tiger's Dominating Body technique."

"To think I would get to see such a fabled skill on this child; I did not expect that," Lady Ren said. "This child is no longer important to us alone. If the family learns about him, they might just take him there to rear him."

Alex was about to argue after hearing that when Lady Ren herself spoke once again.

"No!" she said, surprising the lot. "He is too young right now. He will either grow up to be a pawn or die before getting any strong at all. So, the best choice is to keep him here until he is old enough to know better and fend for himself."

As she said that, she turned to look at Alex who still had cuts appearing all over him. "Does it not hurt, little human? All of these wounds," she asked.

"Huh? Oh yes, it hurts. But I'm used to it. Do you know why this is happening?" he asked.

"I'm not really certain, but I believe that because of your 'Bond of Equal' and you also have the same bloodline, you can cultivate what this child does. However, because of your lack of a similar physique to the White Tiger, your body cannot handle the cultivation method," Lady Ren said.

"I see," Alex said, even though he had already guessed that much.

"Do you have anything else to ask?" Lady Ren asked.

"Yes, a bunch."

Chapter 500: Answers about the Sword

"I have a few unrelated questions and requests that I was hoping you could help me with," Alex said.

Lady Ren looked at him curiously with an amused look on her face. "Requests? I didn't think you would be bold enough for that. But still, go ahead. If it's something I can give easily, I will. Don't try to push your luck though," she said.

"I promise, I won't," Alex said. He quickly brought out a storage bag and stopped. "Um, is there someplace where you wouldn't mind having your floors destroyed?"

The jaguar and puma looked at Alex weirdly, while Lady Ren still had her amused face with her. It even looked like she was enjoying it all.

"If you can put a single dent on this marble, I will fulfill whatever these requests of yours are," Lady Ren said.

"Oh, are these floors very strong then? I guess it's fine then," Alex said and brought out the sword from inside of his storage bag. The brown-ish black sword flew out of the storage bag and immediately fell onto the floor.

It made a very large 'clank' sound and even clattered on the floor for a while, but there seemed to be no signs of a dent on the floor. Just some minor scratches.

Alex was really surprised to see that the sword that could dig through the ground if just kept on it was actually so effortlessly kept away from damaging the marble.

"Woah, is this some sort of special marble? I have never seen something like this," he said in surprise. "That makes me even more curious how you guys managed to carve it to such perfection in the first place. The craftsmen must've been really strong," Alex said. He still couldn't believe that the sword that killed Pearl's mother couldn't even do anything against this marble.

"That's... just an ordinary marble," Lady Ren's voice came from in front of him.

"Is it?" Alex asked as he looked up and saw genuine surprise from all of their faces. "What's wrong? Why do you guys look like that?" Alex asked.

"Where did you find this sword?" Lady Ren asked. Her face was a shade of fascination he hadn't seen before.

"Uhh... this is the sword that was stuck in Pearl's mother, the one I told you guys about," Alex said. He bent down to pick it up and tried to move it, but even with his incredible power, he couldn't do anything.

Lady Ren's face immediately changed from fascination to anger when she heard that. "This is the sword that killed my descendant?" she asked in a solemn voice.

"Yes," Alex said. He was starting to get a little scared when he saw her angry face. He did not want to face the anger of someone this strong.

"Let me see," the jaguar said, intervening to stop Lady Ren from ruining her own mood. "You said you couldn't pick it up, right? Let me check."

The jaguar grabbed the sword by the hilt as well as he could with his paws and tried to pull it up.

He was doing it with one hand and he could barely lift the handle off of the ground, with the tip still touching the ground. He tried with both of his paws the second time and barely got the sword to go up higher than a meter before dropping it as well.

The jaguar was full of sweat in just a few seconds of trying to pick up the sword. Alex watched in surprise as he realized that not even the jaguar could do anything.

'Not even a Saint realm expert could pick this sword up? Is it a very high-grade sword by some chance?' he thought before immediately remembering that was incorrect. 'No, it's an earth-grade sword. It says so in the description. Then the rank must be very high then. What sort of person could use such a heavy sword in this world though?' he wondered.

"Sigh, as expected on the sword that made scratches on the marble. Even without being used it nearly broke our formation," the jaguar said.

"Formation?" Alex asked.

"Yes. This hall has a formation on all of its walls and floor such that even a Saint realm expert couldn't easily destroy it. Yet, this sword is able to do such a thing. I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't a Saint rank sword," the jaguar said.

"It's not a saint rank sword? Then... can it be an Immortal rank sword?" Alex asked.

"You know about the immortal rank? That's unexpected," the jaguar said. The puma walked up and he too couldn't pick the sword up very well. He too had to drop it in the end.

"Lady Ren, this sword really is very unique," the Puma said. "This reminds me of that other sword for some reason too."

"You 3 have got me very curious. Let me try as well," Lady Ren said and walked up to the sword.

Alex waited for her to pick up the sword, but she didn't. Instead, the light started shining from all around her so bright that Alex and the others had to guard their eyes against the light.

As the light faded away, Alex finally put down his hand and was very shocked to see what he did.

In front of him was a middle-aged woman with thick white hair flowing up to her waist. Her skin was very fair as well, and she was wearing a white robe with hints of yellow here and there.

Her human face looked very familiar to Alex too. "Lady Ren?" he questioned as to her facial features somewhat matched to that of her cat form.

The woman said nothing and simply got low to pick up the sword. "Careful, it's heavy—" Alex's voice stuck in his face as he watched Lady Ren simply pick up the sword with no problem whatsoever.

She moved the sword left and right. "Hmm, I see what's going on. This is definitely not an Immortal ranked, but just a Saint ranked sword. There is no doubt about that," she said.

"Huh? Lady Ren, but then why is it so heavy? A saint-ranked expert couldn't possibly fight with that sword," the jaguar said.

"That's because it's not meant to be used by just any saint-ranked expert. It can only be used by the one it accepts as its user," Lady Ren said.

"Oh," the jaguar said as his eyes shined with understanding. "This sword has an artifact spirit?" he asked.

"Yes, a very rudimentary one, but there is one nonetheless. All it can do is choose whether or not it wants the person carrying it to use it. If it allows, the weight becomes insignificant."

"If it doesn't, you will have to bear the weight while carrying you. Fortunately, it doesn't seem to be advanced enough to completely stop you from using it," Lady Ren said.

The jaguar and the puma nodded in understanding, while Alex stood there dumbly, not understanding a thing.

"Um, what is an artifact spirit?" he asked them.

"You don't know?" Lady Ren asked.

"No," Alex said. "And I would also like to know how you look like a human right now."

"Oh, never mind this," Lady Ren said. "You will learn about transformations later on. For now, all you need to know is that I, as well as a few others in this world, can transform as one."

"As for an Artifact spirit, when an artifact is made up of incredibly high ranked material or crafted to perfection, there is a chance that it will grow a spirit of its own that has consciousness," she said.

"I have never seen a saint realm artifact have a spirit before, but it seems they aren't quite impossible. Its users must've left it alone to take in a lot of energy and refine itself a consciousness. That is also another way artifact spirits can be born," Lady Ren said.

"No wonder I thought they were similar. This one also has a spirit in it, huh?" the puma said.

"Well, at least we won't have to worry about this one," Lady Ren said. "The spirit in this one is not as bad as the black o—"

Suddenly, Lady Ren noticed something on the surface of the sword and stopped. She brought it up and looked at it through the shine of the ceiling at a certain angle. Her face suddenly turned all serious and even a little bit worried.

"Why would they attack her?" she mumbled to herself.

"Lady Ren? Are you okay?" the jaguar and puma got worried.

"Yes, I'm fine," Lady Ren said.

"What did you find?" Alex asked.

"Nothing of import to you," Lady Ren said and handed the sword back. Alex let it fall to the ground and then went to pick it up.

He wondered what she saw and he too tried to look at the sword-like she did. At a certain angle, through the light's shine, he could see a sword with something wrapped around it.

"A sword with a snake wrapped around it?" Alex asked in confusion.

"A snake?" the jaguar looked confused.

"That is no snake. That's a dragon," Lady Ren said. "A Dragon wrapped around a sword, that is the crest of the Azure Imperium. Blessed by the Azure dragon himself, they rule the eastern continent in his stead."

"If that sword can bear their crest, then it has to belong to someone important in the Imperium. Whoever killed my descendant belonged to the Azure Imperium," Lady Ren said.

"The only question left to answer now is why?"